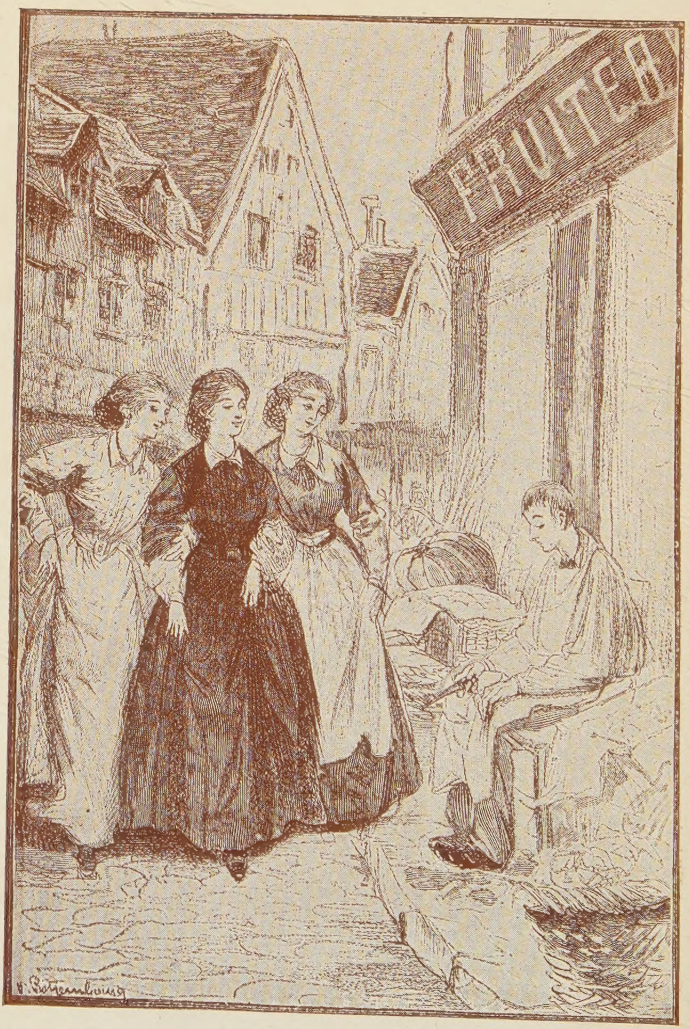
Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/selectedstoriesb0002guyd_c6n2



The girls amused themselves by walking up and down before him.—*Madame Husson's Rosier.*

Selected Stories

BY

Guy De Maupassant

Translated and Edited by

Dora Knowlton Ranous

VOLUME II

The Horla, Monsieur Parent, Miss Harriet
Mount Olivet, Wife and Mistress,
The Inn, The Fathers, The
Open Door, Madame Hus-
son's Rosier, Madem-
oiselle Pearl
M a d !
Etc.

The Leslie-Judge Company
New York

Copyright, 1912, by
THE NEW WERNER COMPANY
Akron, Ohio

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
The Horla	1
Monsieur Parent	39
Miss Harriet	82
Mad!	112
Mademoiselle Pearl	158
The Farmer's Wife	181
A Coward	192
Mount Olivet	203
The Flight of Years	241
The Old Maid	248
The Tellier House	262
The Parricide	300
The Fortune of War	309
Humble Happiness	320
The Mysterious Groom	329
The Open Door	338
Wife and Mistress	346
The Fathers	357
The Mountain Inn	364
Madame Husson's Rosier	384
An Unfortunate Resemblance	409

THE HORLA

MAY 8. What a lovely day! I have spent the morning lying in the grass in front of my house, under the enormous plane-tree that shades the whole of it. I like this part of the country and I like to live here because I am attached to it by old associations, by those deep and delicate roots that attach one to the soil on which his ancestors were born and died, which attach him to the ideas and usages of the place as well as to the food, to local expressions, to the peculiar twang of the peasants, to the smell of the soil, of the villages and of the atmosphere itself.

I love my house, in which I grew up. From my windows I can see the Seine, which flows alongside my garden, on the other side of the highroad, almost through my grounds, the great and wide Seine, which goes to Rouen and Havre, and is covered with passing boats.

On the left, down yonder, lies Rouen, that large town, with its blue roofs, under its pointed Gothic towers. These are innumerable, slender or broad,

dominated by the spire of the cathedral, and full of bells, which sound through the blue air on fine mornings, sending their sweet and distant iron clang even as far as my home; that metallic sound which the breeze wafts in my direction, now stronger and now weaker, according as the wind is stronger or lighter.

What a delicious morning it was!

About eleven o'clock, a long line of boats drawn by a steam tug as big as a fly, which scarcely puffed while emitting its thick smoke, passed my gate.

After two English schooners, whose red flag fluttered in space, came a magnificent Brazilian three-master; it was perfectly white and wonderfully clean and shining. I saluted it, I hardly knew why, except that the sight of it gave me great pleasure.

May 12. I have had a slight feverish attack for a few days, and I feel ill, or rather I feel low-spirited.

Whence come those mysterious influences which change our happiness into discouragement, and our self-confidence into diffidence? One might almost say that the invisible air is full of unknowable powers, whose mysterious presence we have to endure. I wake up in the best of spirits, with an inclination to sing. Why? I go down to the edge of the water, and suddenly, after walking a short distance, I return home wretched, as if some misfortune were awaiting me there. Why? Is it

a cold shiver which, passing over my skin, has upset my nerves and given me low spirits? Is it the form of the clouds, the color of the sky, or the color of the surrounding objects which is so changeable, that has troubled my thoughts as they passed before my eyes? Who can tell? Everything that surrounds us, everything that we see without looking at it, everything that we touch without knowing it, everything that we handle without feeling it, all that we meet without clearly distinguishing it, has a rapid, surprising and inexplicable effect upon us and upon our organs, and through them on our ideas and on the heart itself.

How profound that mystery of the Invisible is! We cannot fathom it with our miserable senses, with our eyes which are unable to perceive what is either too small or too great, too near, or too far —neither the inhabitants of a star nor those of a drop of water; nor with our ears that deceive us, for they transmit to us the vibrations of the air in sonorous notes—they are fairies who work the miracle of changing these vibrations into noise, and by that metamorphosis give birth to music, which make the silent motion of nature musical—with our sense of smell which is less keen than that of a dog —with our sense of taste which can scarcely distinguish the age of wine!

Oh! If only we had other organs which would work other miracles in our favor, what a number of fresh things we might discover around us!

May 16. I am ill, decidedly! I was very well last month. I am feverish, horribly feverish, or rather I am in a state of feverish enervation, from which my mind suffers as much as my body. I have without ceasing that horrible sensation of some impending danger, that apprehension of some coming misfortune, or of approaching death; that presentiment which is, no doubt, an attack of some unknown illness, which germinates in the flesh and in the blood.

May 18. I have just come from consulting my physician, for I could no longer get any sleep. He said my pulse was too frequent, my eyes dilated, my nerves highly strung, but there were no alarming symptoms. I must take a course of shower-baths and of bromide of potassium.

May 25. No change! My condition is really very peculiar. As the evening comes on, an incomprehensible feeling of disquietude seizes me, just as if night concealed some threatening disaster. I dine hurriedly, and then try to read, but I do not understand the words, and can hardly distinguish the letters. Then I walk up and down my drawing-room, oppressed by a feeling of confused and irresistible fear, fear of sleep and fear of my bed.

About ten o'clock I go up to my room. As soon as I enter it I double-lock and bolt my door; I am afraid—of what? Up to the present time I have been afraid of nothing. I open my cupboards, and look under my bed; I listen—to what? How strange

it is that a simple feeling of discomfort, impeded or heightened circulation, perhaps the irritation of a nerve filament, a slight congestion, a small disturbance in the imperfect delicate functioning of our living machinery, may turn the most light-hearted of men into a melancholy one, and make a coward of the bravest? Then I go to bed, and wait for sleep as a man might wait for the executioner. I wait for its coming with dread, and my heart beats and my legs tremble, while my whole body shivers beneath the warmth of the bedclothes, until all at once I fall asleep, as if one should plunge into a pool of stagnant water in order to drown. I do not feel it coming on as I did formerly, this perfidious sleep which is close to me and watching me, which is going to seize me by the head, to close my eyes and annihilate me.

I sleep—a long time—two or three hours perhaps—then a dream—no—a nightmare lays hold on me. I feel that I am in bed and asleep—I feel it and I know it—and I feel also that somebody is coming close to me, is looking at me, touching me, is getting upon my bed, is kneeling on my chest, is taking my neck between his hands and squeezing it, squeezing it with all his might to strangle me.

I struggle, bound by that terrible sense of powerlessness which paralyzes us in our dreams; I try to cry out—but I cannot; I want to move—I cannot do so; I try, with the most violent efforts and breathing hard, to turn over and throw off this be-

ing who is crushing and suffocating me—I cannot!

And then I wake up suddenly, trembling and bathed in perspiration; I light a candle and find that I am alone, and after that crisis, which occurs every night, I at last fall asleep and slumber tranquilly till morning.

June 2. My condition has grown worse. What is the matter with me? The bromide does me no good, and the shower-baths have no effect. Sometimes, in order to tire myself thoroughly, though I am fatigued already, I go for a walk in the forest of Roumare. I used to think at first that the fresh light and soft air, impregnated with the odor of herbs and leaves, would instil new blood into my veins and impart fresh energy to my heart. I turned into a broad hunting-road, and then turned toward La Bouille, through a narrow path, between two rows of tall trees, which formed a thick green, almost black roof.

A sudden shiver ran through me, not cold, but a strange shiver of agony, and I hastened my steps, uneasy at being alone in the forest, afraid, stupidly and without reason, of the profound solitude. Suddenly it seemed as if I were being followed, that somebody was behind me, near enough to touch me.

I turned around suddenly, but I was alone. I saw nothing behind me except the straight, broad path, empty and bordered by high trees, horribly empty; before me it extended until it was lost in the distance, and looked just the same—terrible.

I closed my eyes. Why? And then I began to turn round on one heel very quickly, like a top. I nearly fell down, and opened my eyes; the trees were dancing around me and the earth heaved; I was obliged to sit down. Then, ah! I no longer remembered how I had come! What a strange, strange idea! I did not in the least know. I walked off to the right, and got back into the avenue which had led me into the middle of the forest.

June 3. I have had a terrible night. I shall go away for a few weeks, and no doubt a journey will set me up again.

July 2. I have come back, quite cured, and have had a most delightful trip. I have been to Mont Saint-Michel, which I had not seen before.

What a sight, when one arrives, as I did at Avranches toward the end of the day! The town stands on a hill, and I was taken into the public garden at the extremity of it. I uttered a cry of astonishment. An extraordinarily large bay extended before me, as far as my eyes could reach, between two hills which were lost to sight in the mist; and in the middle of this immense yellow bay, under a clear, golden sky rose a peculiar hill, somber and pointed, in the midst of the sand. The sun had disappeared, and under the still flaming sky uprose the outline of that fantastic rock which bears on its summit a fantastic monument.

At daybreak I went out to it. The tide was low, as it had been the night before, and I saw that won-

derful abbey rise before me as I approached it. After several hours' walking, I reached the enormous mass of rocks which supports the little town, dominated by the great church. Having climbed the steep and narrow street, I entered the most wonderful Gothic building that ever has been built to God on earth, as large as a town, full of low rooms, which seemed buried beneath vaulted roofs, and lofty galleries supported by delicate columns.

I entered this gigantic granite jewel, which looks light as a bit of lace, covered with towers, with slender belfries, to which spiral staircases ascend, and which raise their strange heads that bristle with chimeras, with devils, with fantastic animals, with monstrous flowers, to the blue sky by day, and to the black sky by night, and are connected by finely carved arches.

When I had reached the summit, I said to the monk who accompanied me: "Father, how happy you must be here!" And he replied: "It is very windy here, Monsieur!" and so we began to talk while watching the rising tide, which ran over the sand and covered it as with a steel cuirass.

And then the monk told me stories, all the old stories belonging to the place—legends, nothing but legends.

One of them struck me forcibly. The country people, those belonging to the Mount, declare that at night one can hear voices talking on the sands, and then that one hears two goats bleating, one

with a strong, the other with a weak voice. Incredulous people declare it is nothing but the cry of the sea birds, which occasionally resembles bleatings, and occasionally human lamentations; but belated fishermen swear they have met an old shepherd wandering between tides on the sands around the little town. His head is completely concealed by his cloak and he is followed by a billy-goat with a man's face, and a nanny-goat with a woman's face, both having long, white hair and talking incessantly and quarreling in an unknown tongue. Then suddenly they cease, and bleat with all their might.

"Do you believe it?" I asked the monk. "I hardly know," he replied, and I continued: "If there are other beings besides ourselves on this earth, how comes it that we have not known it long since, or why have *you* not seen them? How is it that *I* have not seen them?" He replied: "Do we see the hundred thousandth part of what exists? Look here; there is the wind, which is the strongest force in nature, which knocks down men, and blows down buildings, uproots trees, raises the sea into mountains of water, destroys cliffs and casts great ships on the rocks; the wind which kills, which whistles, which sighs, which roars—have you ever seen it, and can you see it? It exists for all that, however."

I was silent before this simple reasoning. That man was a philosopher, or perhaps a fool; I could

not say which exactly, so I held my tongue. What he had said had often been in my own thoughts.

July 3. I have slept badly; certainly there is some feverish influence here, for my coachman is suffering in the same way that I am. When I returned home yesterday, I noticed his singular paleness, and I asked him: "What is the matter with you, Jean?" "The matter is that I never get any rest, and my nights devour my days. Since your departure, Monsieur, there has been a spell over me."

The other servants are all well, but I am afraid of having another attack myself.

July 4. I am decidedly ill again; for my old nightmares have returned. Last night I felt somebody leaning on me and sucking my life from between my lips. Yes, he was sucking it out of my throat, like a leech. Then he got up, satiated, and I woke up, so exhausted, crushed and weak that I could not move. If this continues for a few days, I shall certainly go away again.

July 5. Have I lost my reason? What happened last night is so strange that my mind wanders when I think of it!

I had locked my door, as I do now every evening, and then I drank half a glass of water, and accidentally noticed that the water-bottle was full.

Then I went to bed and fell into one of my terrible sleeps, from which I was aroused in about two hours by a still more frightful shock.

Picture to yourself a sleeping man who is being murdered and who wakes up with a knife in his lung, and whose breath rattles, who is covered with blood, and who can no longer breathe and is about to die and does not understand—there you have it.

Having recovered my senses, I was thirsty again, so I lighted a candle and went to the table on which stood my water-bottle. I lifted it and tilted it over my glass, but nothing came out. It was empty—completely empty! At first I could not understand it at all, and then suddenly I was seized by such a terrible feeling that I had to sit down, or rather I fell into a chair! Then I sprang up suddenly to look about me; then I sat down again overcome by astonishment and fear, in front of the transparent glass bottle! I looked at it with fixed eyes, trying to conjecture, and my hands trembled! Somebody had drunk the water, but who? I? I without any doubt. Surely it could only be I. In that case I was a somnambulist; I lived, without knowing it, that mysterious double life which makes us doubt whether there are not two beings in us, or whether a strange, unknowable, and invisible being does not at such moments, when our soul is in a state of torpor, animate our captive body, which obeys this other being, as it obeys us, and more than it obeys ourselves.

Oh! Who will understand my horrible agony? Who will understand the emotion of a man sound in mind, wide awake, full of common-sense, who

looks in horror through the glass of a water-bottle for a little water that disappeared while he was asleep? I remained thus until daylight, without venturing to return to bed.

July 6. I am going mad. Again all the contents of my water-bottle have been drunk in the night—or, rather, I have drunk it!

But is it I? Is it I? Who could it be? Who? Oh, God! Am I going mad? Who will save me?

July 10. I have just been through some surprising ordeals. Decidedly I am mad! And yet! On July 6, before going to bed, I put some wine, milk, water, bread, and strawberries on my table. Somebody drank—I drank—all the water and a little of the milk, but the wine, the bread, and the strawberries were untouched.

On the seventh of July I renewed the experiment, with the same results, and on July 8 I left out the water and the milk, and nothing was touched.

Lastly, on July 9, I put only water and milk on my table, taking care to wrap up the bottles in white muslin and to tie down the stoppers. Then I rubbed my lips, my beard and my hands with pencil lead, and went to bed, filled with fearful apprehensions.

Irresistible sleep seized me, which was soon followed by a terrible awakening. I had not moved, and there was no mark of lead on the sheets. I rushed to the table. The muslin round the bottles remained intact; I undid the string, trembling with

fear. All the water had been drunk, and so had the milk! Ah! Great God!

I must go to Paris immediately.

July 12. Paris. I must have lost my head during the last few days! I must be the plaything of my enervated imagination, unless I am really a somnambulist, or I have been under the power of one of those hitherto unexplained influences which are called suggestions. In any case, my mental state bordered on madness, and twenty-four hours of Paris sufficed to restore my equilibrium.

Yesterday after doing some business and paying some visits which instilled fresh and invigorating air into my soul, I wound up the evening at the Théâtre-Français. A play by Alexandre Dumas the younger was on the boards, and his active and powerful imagination completed my cure. Certainly solitude is dangerous for active minds. We require to be with men who can think and can talk. When we are alone for a long time, we people space with phantoms.

In excellent spirits I returned to my hotel. Amid the jostling of the crowd I thought, not without irony, of my terrors and surmises of the previous week, because I had believed—yes, I had believed—that an invisible being lived beneath my roof. How weak our brains are, and how quickly they are terrified and led into error by a small, incomprehensible fact!

Instead of saying simply: "I do not understand,

because I do not know the cause," we imagine terrible mysteries and supernatural powers.

July 14. Fête of the Republic. I walked through the streets, amused as a child at the fire-crackers and flags. Still it is very foolish to be merry on a fixed date, by Government decree. The populace is an imbecile flock of sheep, now stupidly patient, and now in ferocious revolt. Say to it: "Amuse yourself," and it amuses itself. Say to it: "Go and fight with your neighbor," and it goes and fights. Say to it: "Vote for the Emperor," and it votes for the Emperor, and then say to it: "Vote for the Republic," and it votes for the Republic.

Those who direct it are also stupid; only instead of obeying men, they obey principles, which can only be stupid, sterile, and false, for the very reason that they are principles, that is to say, ideas which are considered as certain and unchangeable, in this world where one is certain of nothing, since light is an illusion and noise is an illusion.

July 16. I saw some things yesterday that troubled me very much.

I was dining at the house of my cousin, Madame Sablé, whose husband is colonel of the 76th Chausseurs at Limoges. Two young women were there, one of whom had married a medical man, Doctor Parent, who devotes much attention to nervous diseases and to the remarkable manifestations taking place at this moment under the influence of hypnotism and suggestion.

He related to us at some length the wonderful results obtained by English scientists and by the doctors of the Nancy school; and the facts he adduced appeared to me so strange that I declared that I was altogether incredulous.

"We are," he declared, "on the point of discovering one of the most important secrets of nature; I mean to say, one of its most important secrets on this earth, for there are certainly others of a different kind of importance up in the stars, yonder. Ever since man has thought, and has been able to express and write down his thoughts, he has felt himself close to a mystery impenetrable to his gross and imperfect senses, and he endeavors to supplement through his intellect his lack of organic power. As long as that intellect remained in its elementary stage, these apparitions of invisible spirits assumed forms that were commonplace though terrifying. Thence sprang the popular belief in the supernatural, the legends of wandering spirits, of fairies, of gnomes, ghosts, I might even say the legend of God; for our conceptions of the workman-creator, from whatever religion they may have come down to us, are certainly the most mediocre, the most stupid and the most incredible inventions that ever sprang from the terrified brain of any human being. Nothing is truer than what Voltaire says: 'God made man in His own image, but man has certainly paid Him back in His own coin.'

"However, for rather more than a century men

seem to have had a presentiment of something new. Mesmer and some others have put us on an unexpected track, and especially within two or three years we have arrived at surprising results."

My cousin, who is also very incredulous, smiled, and Doctor Parent said to her: "Would you like me to try to send you to sleep, Madame?" "Yes, certainly."

She sat in an easy chair, and he began to look at her fixedly, so as to fascinate her. I suddenly felt myself growing uncomfortable, my heart beating rapidly and a choking sensation in my throat. I saw Madame Sablé's eyes becoming heavy, her mouth twitching and her bosom heaving, and at the end of ten minutes she was asleep.

"Go behind her," the doctor said to me, and I took a seat behind her. He put a visiting-card into her hands, and said to her: "This is a looking-glass; what do you see in it?" And she replied: "I see my cousin." "What is he doing?" "He is twisting his moustache." "And now?" "He is taking a photograph out of his pocket." "Whose photograph is it?" "His own."

That was true, and the photograph had been given to me that same evening at the hotel.

"What is his attitude in this portrait?" "He is standing up with his hat in his hand."

She saw, therefore, on that card, on that piece of white pasteboard, as if she had seen it in a mirror.

The young women were frightened, and exclaimed: "That is enough! Quite enough!"

But the doctor said to Madame Sablé authoritatively: "You will rise at eight o'clock to-morrow morning; then you will go and call on your cousin at his hotel and ask him to lend you five thousand francs which your husband demands of you, and which he will ask for when he sets out on his coming journey."

Then he woke her up.

On returning to my hotel, I thought over this curious séance, and I was assailed by doubts, not as to my cousin's absolute and undoubted good faith, for I had known her as well as if she were my own sister ever since she was a child, but as to a possible trick on the doctor's part. Had he not, perhaps, kept a glass hidden in his hand, which he showed to the young woman in her sleep, at the same time that he gave her the card? Professional conjurors do things that are just as singular.

So I went home and to bed, and this morning, at about half-past eight, I was awakened by my valet, who said to me: "Madame Sablé has asked to see you immediately, Monsieur." I dressed hastily and went to her.

She sat down in some agitation, with her eyes on the floor, and without raising her veil she said to me: "My dear cousin, I am going to ask a great favor of you." "What is it, cousin?" "I do not like to tell you, and yet I must. I am in absolute need of five thousand francs." "What, you?" "Yes, I, or rather my husband, who has asked me to procure them for him."

I was so thunderstruck that I stammered out my answers. I asked myself whether she had not really been making fun of me with Doctor Parent, if it were not merely a well-acted farce which had been rehearsed beforehand. On looking at her attentively, however, my doubts disappeared. She was trembling with grief, so painful was this step to her, and I believed her throat was full of sobs.

I knew she was very rich, and I continued: "What! Has not your husband five thousand francs at his disposal? Come, think. Are you sure that he commissioned you to ask me for them?"

She hesitated for a few seconds, as if she were making a great effort to search her memory, and then she replied: "Yes—yes, I am quite sure of it."

"He has written to you?"

She hesitated again and reflected, and I guessed the torture of her thoughts. She did not know. She only knew that she was to borrow five thousand francs of me for her husband. So she told a lie. "Yes, he has written to me." "When, pray? You did not mention it to me yesterday." "I received his letter this morning." "Can you show it me?" "No; no—no—it contained private matters, things too personal to ourselves. I burnt it." "So your husband runs into debt?"

She hesitated again, and then murmured. "I do not know." Thereupon I said bluntly: "I have not five thousand francs at my disposal at this moment, my dear cousin."

She uttered a kind of cry as if she were in pain and said: "Oh! oh, I beseech you, I beseech you to get them for me."

She became excited and clasped her hands as if she were praying to me! I heard her voice change its tone; she wept and stammered, harassed and dominated by the irresistible order that she had received.

"Oh! oh! I beg you to—if you knew what I am suffering—I want them to-day."

I had pity on her: "You shall have them by and by, I swear to you." "Oh! thank you! thank you! How kind you are."

I continued: "Do you remember what took place at your house last night?" "Yes." "Do you remember that Doctor Parent sent you to sleep?" "Yes." "Oh! Very well, then; he ordered you to come to me this morning to borrow five thousand francs, and at this moment you are obeying that suggestion."

She considered for a few moments, and then replied: "But as it is my husband who wants them—".

For a whole hour I tried to convince her, but could not succeed, and when she left I went to the doctor. He was just going out, and he listened to me with a smile, and said: "Do you believe now?" "Yes, I cannot help it." "Let us go to your cousin's."

She was already half asleep on a reclining-chair, overcome with fatigue. The doctor felt her pulse,

looked at her for some time with one hand raised toward her eyes, which she closed by degrees under the irresistible power of this magnetic influence, and when she was asleep, he said:

"Your husband does not require the five thousand francs any longer! You must, therefore, forget that you asked your cousin to lend them to you, and, if he speaks to you about it, you will not understand him."

Then he woke her, and I took out a pocketbook and said: "Here is what you asked me for this morning, my dear cousin." But she was so surprised that I did not venture to persist; nevertheless, I tried to recall the circumstance to her, but she denied it vigorously, thought I was making fun of her, and, in the end, very nearly lost her temper.

There! I have just come back, and I have not been able to eat any luncheon, for this experiment has upset me.

July 19. Many to whom I told the adventure laughed at me. I no longer know what to think.

The wise man says: "It may be!"

July 21. I dined at Bougival, and then I spent the evening at a boatman's ball. Surely everything depends on place and surroundings. It would be the height of folly to believe in the supernatural on the Ile de la Grenouillière, but on the top of Mont Saint-Michel? and in India? We are terribly influenced by our surroundings. I shall return home next week.

July 30. I came back to my own house yesterday. Everything is going on well.

August 2. Nothing new; it is splendid weather, and I spend my days in watching the Seine.

August 4. Quarrels among my servants. They declare that the glasses are broken in the cupboards at night. The footman accuses the cook, who accuses the seamstress, who accuses the other two. Who is the culprit?

August 6. This time, I am not mad. I have seen —I have seen—I have seen! I can doubt no longer, for I have seen it!

I was walking at two o'clock among my rose trees, in the full sunlight, in the walk bordered by autumn roses, which are beginning to fall. As I stopped to look at a Géant de Bataille, which had three splendid blossoms, I distinctly saw the stalk of one of the roses near me bend, as if an invisible hand had bent it, and then break, as if that hand had picked it! Then the flower raised itself, following the curve which a hand would have described in carrying it toward a mouth, and it remained suspended in the transparent air, all alone and motionless, a terrible red spot, three yards from my eyes. In desperation I rushed at it to take it! I found nothing; it had disappeared. Then I was seized with furious rage against myself, for a reasonable and serious man should not have such hallucinations.

But was it an hallucination? I turned round to

look for the stalk, and I found it at once on the bush, freshly broken, between two other roses which remained on the branch. I returned home then, my mind greatly disturbed; for I am certain now, as certain as I am of the alternation of day and night, that there exists close to me an invisible being that lives on milk and water, that can touch objects, take them and change their places; that is, consequently, endowed with a material nature, although it is imperceptible to our senses, and that lives as I do, under my roof.

August 7. I slept tranquilly. He drank the water out of my decanter, but did not disturb my sleep.

I wonder if I am mad. As I was walking just now in the sun by the riverside, doubts as to my sanity arose in me; not vague doubts such as I have had hitherto, but definite, absolute doubts. I have seen mad people, and I have known some who have been quite intelligent, lucid, even clear-sighted in every concern of life, except on one point. They spoke clearly, readily, profoundly on everything, when suddenly their thoughts struck upon the breakers of their madness and broke to pieces there, and scattered and foundered in that furious and terrible sea, full of rolling waves, fogs and squalls which is called *madness.*

I certainly should think I was mad, absolutely mad, if I were not conscious, did not perfectly know my condition, did not fathom it by analyzing

it with the most complete lucidity. I should, in fact, be only a rational man laboring under an hallucination. Some unknown disturbance must have arisen in my brain, one of those disturbances which physiologists of the present day try to note and to verify; and that disturbance must have caused a deep gap in my mind and in the sequence and logic of my ideas. Similar phenomena occur in dreams, which lead us among the most unlikely phantasmagoria, without causing us any surprise, because our verifying apparatus and our sense of control is asleep, while our imaginative faculty is awake and active. Is it not possible that one of the imperceptible notes of the cerebral keyboard has been paralyzed in me? Some men lose the recollection of proper names, of verbs, or of numbers, or merely of dates, in consequence of an accident. The localization of all the variations of thought has been proved; why, then, should it be surprising if my faculty of controlling the unreality of certain hallucinations were destroyed for the time being!

I thought of all this as I walked by the side of the water. The sun shone brightly on the river and made earth delightful, while it filled me with a love for life, for the swallows, whose agility always delights my eyes, for the plants by the riverside, the rustle of whose leaves is a pleasure to my ears.

By degrees, however, an inexplicable feeling of discomfort seized me. It seemed as if some unknown force were numbing and stopping me, were

preventing me from going farther, and calling me back. I felt that painful wish to return which oppresses you when you have left a beloved invalid at home, and when you are seized by a presentiment that he is worse.

I, therefore, returned in spite of myself, feeling certain that I should find some bad news awaiting me, a letter or a telegram. There was nothing, however, and I was more surprised and uneasy than if I had had another fantastic vision.

August 8. I spent a terrible evening, yesterday. He does not show himself any more, but I feel that he is near me, watching me, looking at me, penetrating me, dominating me, and more redoubtable when he hides himself thus than if he were to manifest his constant and invisible presence of supernatural phenomena. However, I slept.

August 9. Nothing, but I am afraid.

August 10. Nothing; what will happen to-morrow?

August 11. Still nothing; I cannot sleep at home with this fear hanging over me and these thoughts in my mind; I shall go away.

August 12. Ten o'clock at night. All day long I have been trying to get away, and have not been able. I wished to accomplish this simple and easy act of freedom—go out—get into my carriage to go to Rouen—and I have not been able to do it. What is the reason?

August 13. When one is attacked by certain

maladies, all the springs of his physical being appear to be broken, all his energies destroyed, all his muscles relaxed; his bones, too, have become as soft as flesh, and his blood as limpid as water. I am experiencing these sensations in my moral being in a strange and distressing manner. I have no longer any strength, any courage, any self-control, not even any power to set my own will in motion. I have no power left to will anything; but someone does it for me, and I obey.

August 14. I am lost! Somebody possesses my soul and dominates it. Somebody orders all my acts, all my movements, all my thoughts. I am no longer anything in myself, nothing but an enslaved and terrified spectator of all the things I do. I wish to go out; I cannot. He does not wish to, and so I remain, trembling and distracted, in the armchair in which he keeps me sitting. I merely wish to get up and to rouse myself; I cannot! I am riveted to my chair, and my chair adheres to the ground so that no power could move us.

Then suddenly I must, I must go to the bottom of my garden to pick some strawberries and eat them, and I go there. I pick the strawberries and eat them! Oh, my God! My God! Is there a God? If there be one, deliver me! Save me! Succor me! Pardon! Pity! Mercy! Save me! Oh, what sufferings! What torture! What horror!

August 15. This certainly is the way in which my poor cousin was possessed and controlled when

she came to borrow five thousand francs. She was under the power of a strange will which had entered into her, like another soul, like a parasitic and dominating soul. Is the world coming to an end?

But who is he, this invisible being that rules me? This unknowable being, this rover of a supernatural race? Invisible beings exist, then! How is it, then, that since the beginning of the world they never have manifested themselves precisely as they do to me? I never have read of anything that resembles what goes on in my house. Oh, if only I could leave it, if I could go away, escape, and never return! I should be saved, but I cannot.

August 16. I managed to escape to-day for two hours, like a prisoner who finds the door of his dungeon accidentally open. I suddenly felt that I was free and that he was far away, and so I gave orders to harness the horses as quickly as possible, and I drove to Rouen. Oh, how delightful to be able to say to a man who obeys you: "Go to Rouen!"

I made him pull up before the library, and I asked them to lend me Doctor Herrmann Herestauss's treatise on the unknown inhabitants of the ancient and modern world.

Then, as I was getting into my carriage, I intended to say: "To the railway station!" but instead of this I shouted—I did not say, but I shouted—in a voice so loud that all the passers-by turned around: "Home!" and I fell back on the cushion of my carriage, overcome by mental agony. He had found me again and regained possession of me.

August 17. Oh, what a night! What a night! And yet it seems to me that I ought to rejoice. I read until one o'clock in the morning! Herestauss, Doctor of Philosophy and Theogony, wrote the history and the manifestation of all those invisible beings which hover around man, or of whom he dreams. He describes their origin, their domain, their power; but none of them resembles the one that haunts me. One might say that man ever since he began to think has had a foreboding fear of a new being, stronger than himself, his successor in this world, and that, feeling his presence, and not being able to foresee the nature of that master, in his terror, he has created the whole race of occult beings, of vague phantoms born of fear.

Having, therefore, read until one o'clock in the morning, I sat down at the open window, in order to cool my forehead and my thoughts in the calm night air. It was very pleasant and warm! How I should have enjoyed such a night formerly!

There was no moon, but the stars sent out their rays in the dark heavens. Who inhabits those worlds? What forms, what living beings, what animals are there yonder? What do the thinkers in those distant worlds know more than we know? What can they do more than we can? What do they see which we do not know? Will not one of them, some day, traversing space, appear on our earth to conquer it, just as the Norsemen formerly crossed the sea to subjugate nations more feeble than themselves?

We are so weak, so defenseless, so ignorant, so small, we who live on this particle of mud which revolves in a drop of water.

I fell asleep, dreaming thus in the cool night air, and when I had slept about three-quarters of an hour, I opened my eyes without moving, awakened by a confused and strange sensation. At first I saw nothing, and then suddenly it appeared to me as if a page of a book that had remained open on my table turned over of its own accord. Not a breath of air had come in at my window, and I was surprised, and waited. In about four minutes, I saw, I saw, yes, I saw with my own eyes another page lift itself up and fall down on the others, as if a finger had turned it over. My armchair was empty, appeared empty, but I knew that he was there, and sitting in my place, and that he was reading. With a furious bound, the bound of an enraged wild beast that springs at its tamer, I crossed my room to seize him, to strangle him, to kill him! But before I could reach it, the chair fell over as if somebody had run away from me—my table rocked, my lamp fell and went out, and my window closed as if some thief had been surprised and had fled out into the night, shutting it behind him.

So he had run away; he had been afraid; he, afraid of me!

But—but—to-morrow—or later—some day or other—I should be able to hold him in my clutches and crush him against the ground! Do not dogs occasionally bite and strangle their masters?

August 18. I have been thinking the whole day long. Oh, yes, I will obey him, follow his impulses, fulfil all his wishes, show myself humble, submissive, a coward. He is the stronger; but the hour will come——

August 19. I know—I know—I know all! I have just read the following in the *Revue du Monde Scientifique:* "A curious piece of news comes to us from Rio de Janeiro. Madness, an epidemic of madness, which may be compared to that contagious madness which attacked the people of Europe in the Middle Ages, is at this moment raging in the Province of San-Paolo. The terrified inhabitants are leaving their houses, saying they are pursued, possessed, dominated like human cattle by invisible, though tangible beings, a species of vampire, which feed on their life while they are asleep, and who, besides, drink water and milk without appearing to touch any other nourishment.

"Professor Don Pedro Henriques, accompanied by several medical savants, has gone to the Province of San-Paolo, to study the origin and the manifestations of this surprising madness on the spot, and to propose such measures to the Emperor as may appear to be most fitted to restore the mad population to reason."

Ah! Ah! I remember now that fine Brazilian three-master which passed in front of my windows as it was going up the Seine, on the 8th day of last May! I thought it looked so pretty, so white and

bright! That Being was on board of her, coming from there, where its race originated. And it saw me! It saw my house, which also was white, and it sprang from the ship to the land. Oh, merciful heaven!

Now I know, I can divine. The reign of man is over, and he has come. He who was feared by primitive man; whom disquieted priests exorcised; whom sorcerers evoked on dark nights, without having seen him appear; to whom the imagination of the transient masters of the world lent all the monstrous or graceful forms of gnomes, sprites, genii, fairies and familiar spirits. After the coarse conceptions of primitive fear, more clear-sighted men foresaw it more clearly. Mesmer divined him, and ten years ago physicians accurately discovered the nature of his power, even before he exercised it himself. They played with this weapon of their new Lord, the sway of a mysterious will over the human soul, which had become a slave. They called it magnetism, hypnotism, suggestion—what do I know? I have seen them amusing themselves like rash children with this horrible power! Woe to us! Woe to man! He has come, the—the—what does he call himself—the—I fancy that he is shouting out his name to me and I do not hear him—the—yes—he is shouting it out—I am listening—I cannot—he repeats it—the—Horla—I hear—the Horla—it is he—the Horla—he has come! The Horla has come!

Ah! the vulture has eaten the pigeon; wolf has eaten the lamb; the lion has devoured the sharp-horned buffalo; man has killed the lion with an arrow, with a sword, with gunpowder; but the Horla will make of man what we have made of the horse and of the ox; his chattel, his slave and his food, by the mere power of his will. Woe to us!

Nevertheless, the animal sometimes revolts and kills the man who has subjugated it. I should also like—I shall be able to—but I must know him, touch him, see him! Scientists say that beasts' eyes, being different from ours, do not distinguish objects as ours do. And my eye cannot distinguish this newcomer who is oppressing me.

Why? Oh, now I remember the words of the monk at Mont Saint-Michel: "Can we see the hundred-thousandth part of what exists? See here; there is the wind, which is the strongest force in nature, which knocks down men, and blows down buildings, uproots trees, raises the sea into mountains of water, destroys cliffs and casts great ships on the breakers; the wind which kills, which whistles, which sighs, which roars—have you ever seen it, and can you see it? It exists for all that, however!"

And I went on thinking: my eyes are so weak, so imperfect, that they do not even distinguish hard bodies, if they are as transparent as glass! If a glass without tinfoil behind it were to bar my way, I should run into it, just as a bird which has flown

into a room breaks its head against the window-panes. A thousand things, moreover, deceive him and lead him astray. Why should it then be surprising that he cannot perceive an unknown body through which the light passes?

A new being! Why not? It was assuredly bound to come! Why should we be the last? We do not distinguish it any more than all the others created before us! The reason is, that its nature is more perfect, its body finer and more finished than ours, that ours is so weak, so awkwardly constructed, encumbered with organs that are always tired, always on the strain like machinery that is too complicated, which lives like a plant and like a beast, nourishing itself with difficulty on air, herbs and flesh, an animal machine which is a prey to maladies, to malformations, to decay; broken-winded, badly regulated, simple and eccentric, ingeniously yet badly made, both a coarse and a delicate piece of workmanship, the sketch of a being that might become intelligent and grand.

We are only a few, so few in this world, from the oyster up to man. Why should there not be one more, when once that period is passed which separates the successive apparitions from all the different species?

Why not one more? Why not, also, other trees with immense, splendid flowers, perfuming whole regions? Why not other elements besides fire, air, earth, and water? There are four, only four, those

nursing fathers of various beings! What a pity! Why not forty, four hundred, four thousand? How poor everything is, how mean and wretched! grudgingly given, dryly invented, clumsily made! Ah, the elephant and the hippopotamus, what grace! And the camel, what elegance!

But the butterfly, you will say, a flying flower! I dream of one that should be as large as a hundred worlds, with wings whose shape, beauty, colors and motion I cannot even express. But I see it—it flutters from star to star, refreshing them and perfuming them with the light and harmonious breath of its flight! And as it passes the people up there look at it in an ecstasy of delight!

What is the matter with me? It is he, the Horla, who haunts me, and who makes me think of these foolish things! He is within me, he is becoming my soul; I shall kill him!

August 19. I shall kill him. I have seen him! Yesterday I sat down at my table and pretended to write very assiduously. I knew he would come prowling around me, quite close to me, so close that I might perhaps be able to touch him, to seize him. And then—then I should have the strength of desperation; I should have my hands, my knees, my chest, my forehead, my teeth to strangle him, to crush him, to bite him, to tear him to pieces. And I watched for him with all my over-excited organs.

I had lighted my two lamps and the eight wax candles on my mantelpiece, as if with this illumination I could discover him.

My bedstead, my old oak-post bedstead, stood opposite to me; on my right was the fireplace; on my left the door, which was carefully closed, after I had left it open for some time, to attract him; behind me was a very high wardrobe with a looking-glass in it, before which I stood to shave and dress every day, and in which I was in the habit of glancing at myself from head to foot every time I passed it.

To deceive him I pretended to be writing, for he also was watching me, and suddenly I felt—I was certain that he was reading over my shoulder, that he was there, touching my ear.

I got up, my hands extended, and turned round so quickly that I almost fell. Eh! well? It was as bright as midday, but I did not see my reflection in the mirror! It was empty, clear, profound, full of light! But my figure was not reflected in it—and I, I was opposite to it! I saw the large, clear glass from top to bottom, and I looked at it with unsteady eyes; and I did not dare to advance; I did not venture to make a movement, feeling that he was there, but that he would escape me again, he whose imperceptible body had absorbed my reflection.

How frightened I was! And then, suddenly, I began to see myself in a mist in the depths of the looking-glass, in a mist as it were a sheet of water; and it seemed to me as if this water were flowing slowly from left to right, and making my figure

clearer every moment. It was like the end of an eclipse. Whatever it was that hid me did not appear to possess any clearly defined outlines, but a sort of opaque translucence, which gradually became clearer. At last I was able to distinguish myself completely, as I do every day when I look at myself.

I had seen it! And the horror of it remained with me, and makes me shudder even now.

August 20. How could I kill it, as I could not get hold of it? Poison? But it would see me mix it with the water; and then, would our poisons have any effect on its impalpable body? No—no—no doubts about the matter— Then—then—?

August 21. I sent for a blacksmith from Rouen, and ordered iron shutters for my room, such as some private hotels in Paris have on the ground floor, for fear of burglars, and he is going to make me an iron door as well. I have made myself out a coward, but I do not care about that!

September 10. Rouen, Hotel Continental. It is done—it is done—but is he dead? My mind is thoroughly upset by what I have seen.

Well, then, yesterday, the blacksmith put on the iron shutters and door and I left everything open until midnight, although it was growing cold.

Suddenly I felt that he was there, and joy, mad joy, took possession of me. I got up softly, and walked up and down for some time, so that he might not suspect anything; then I took off my

boots and put on my slippers carelessly; then I fastened the iron shutters, and, going back to the door, quickly double-locked it with a padlock, putting the key into my pocket.

Suddenly I noticed that he was moving restlessly round me, that in his turn he was frightened and was ordering me to let him out. I nearly yielded; I did not, however, but, putting my back to the door, I half opened it, just enough to allow me to go out backward, and as I am very tall, my head touched the casing. I was sure that he had not been able to escape, and I shut him up quite alone. What happiness! I had him fast. Then I ran downstairs; in the drawing-room, which was under my bedroom, I took two lamps and I poured all the oil upon the carpet, the furniture, everywhere; then I set fire to it and made my escape, after I had carefully double-locked the door.

I went and hid myself at the bottom of the garden, in a clump of laurel bushes. How long it seemed! Everything was dark, silent, motionless, not a breath of air and not a star, but heavy banks of clouds which one could not see, but which weighed, oh, so heavily on my soul.

I looked at my house and waited. How long it was! I already began to think that the fire had gone out of its own accord, or that he had extinguished it, when one of the lower windows gave way under the violence of the flames, and a long, soft, caressing sheet of red flame mounted up the

white wall, and enveloped it as far as the roof. The light fell on the trees, the branches, and the leaves, and a shiver of fear pervaded them also! The birds awoke; a dog began to howl, and it seemed to me as if the day were breaking! Almost immediately two other windows flew into fragments, and I saw that the whole of the lower part of my house was a terrible furnace. But a cry, a horrible, shrill, heartrending cry, a woman's cry, sounded through the night, and two garret windows were opened! I had forgotten the servants! I saw their terror-struck faces, and their arms waving frantically!

Then, overwhelmed with horror, I set off to run to the village, shouting: "Help! help! fire! fire!" I met some people who were coming to the scene, and I returned with them.

By this time the house was a horrible and magnificent funeral pile, a monstrous funeral pile which lighted up the whole country, a funeral pile where men were burning, and where he was burning, also. He, He, my prisoner, that new Being, the new master, the Horla!

Suddenly the whole roof fell in between the walls, and a volcano of flames darted up to the sky. Through all the windows that opened on that furnace, I saw the flames playing, and I thought he was there, in that kiln, dead.

Dead? Perhaps?——His body? Was not his body, which was transparent, indestructible by such means as would kill ours?

If he were not dead?—— Perhaps time alone has power over that Invisible and Redoubtable Being. Why this transparent, unrecognizable body, this body belonging to a spirit, if it also has to fear ills, infirmities, and premature destruction?

Premature destruction? All human terror springs from that! After man, the Horla. After him who can die every day, at any hour, at any moment, by any accident, came the one who would die only at his own proper hour, day, and minute, because he had touched the limits of his existence!

No—no—without any doubt—he is not dead—— Then—then—I suppose I must kill myself!

MONSIEUR PARENT

GEORGE'S father, sitting in an iron chair, was watching his little son with earnest affection and attention, as little George piled up the sand into heaps during one of their walks. He would take up the sand with both hands, make a mound of it, and put a chestnut-leaf on top. In that public park full of people, his father saw none but him.

The sun was disappearing behind the roofs of the Rue Saint-Lazare, but still shed its rays obliquely on that little, overdressed crowd. The chestnut-trees were lighted up by its yellow rays, and the three fountains before the lofty porch of the church had the appearance of liquid silver.

Monsieur Parent, glancing up at the church clock, saw that he was five minutes late. He got up, took the child by the arm, shook his dress, which was covered with sand, wiped his hands, and led him in the direction of the Rue Blanche. He walked quickly, so as not to get in after his wife, and the child could not keep up with him. He took

him up and carried him, though it made him pant when he had to walk up the steep street. He was a man of forty, already turning gray, and rather stout.

At last he reached his house. An old servant who had brought him up, one of those trusted servants who are the tyrants of families, opened the door to him.

"Has Madame come in yet?" he asked anxiously.

The servant shrugged her shoulders:

"When have you ever known Madame to come home at half-past six, Monsieur?"

"Very well; all the better; it will give me time to change my things, for I am very warm."

The servant eyed him with angry and contemptuous pity. "Oh, I can see that well enough," she grumbled. "You are covered with perspiration, Monsieur. I suppose you walked quickly and carried the child; and only to have to wait until half-past seven, perhaps, for Madame. I have made up my mind not to have dinner ready on time. I shall get it at eight o'clock, and if you have to wait, I cannot help it; roast meat should not be burned!"

Monsieur Parent pretended not to hear, but went into his own room, and as soon as he got in, locked the door. He was so used now to being abused and badly treated that he never thought himself safe except when he was locked in.

What could he do? To get rid of Julie seemed to him such a formidable thing to do that he hardly ventured to think of it, but it was as impossible to uphold her against his wife, and before another month the situation would become unbearable between the two. He remained sitting there, with his arms hanging down, vaguely trying to discover some means to set matters straight, but without success. He said to himself: "It is lucky that I have George; without him I should be very miserable."

Just then the clock struck seven, and he started up. Seven o'clock, and he had not even changed his clothes. Nervous and breathless, he undressed, put on a clean shirt, hastily finished his toilet, as if he had been expected in the next room for some event of extreme importance, and went into the drawing-room, happy at having nothing to fear. He glanced at the newspaper, went and looked out of the window, and then sat down again, when the door opened, and the boy came in, washed, brushed, and smiling. Parent took him up in his arms and kissed him passionately; then he tossed him into the air, and held him up to the ceiling, but soon sat down again, as he was tired with all his exertion. Then, taking George on his knee, he made him ride a cock-horse. The child laughed and clapped his hands and shouted, as did his father, who laughed until his big stomach shook, for it amused him as well.

Parent loved him with all the heart of a weak,

resigned, ill-used man. He loved him with mad bursts of affection, with caresses and with all the bashful tenderness that was hidden in him, which never had found an outlet, even at the early period of his married life, for his wife had always shown herself cold and reserved.

Just then Julie came to the door, with a pale face and glistening eyes, and said in a voice that trembled with exasperation: "It is half-past seven, Monsieur."

Parent gave an uneasy and resigned look at the clock and replied: "Yes, it certainly is half-past seven."

"Well, my dinner is quite ready now."

Seeing the storm coming, he tried to turn it aside. "But did you not tell me when I came in that it would not be ready before eight?"

"Eight! What are you thinking about? You surely do not mean to let the child dine at eight o'clock? It would ruin his stomach. Just suppose that he had only his mother to look after him! She cares a great deal about her child. Oh, yes, we will speak about her; she is a mother! What a pity it is that there should be any mothers like her!"

Parent thought it was time to cut short a threatened scene. "Julie," he said, "I will not allow you to speak like that of your mistress. You understand me, do you not? Do not forget it in the future."

The old servant, who was nearly choked with surprise, turned and went out, slamming the door so violently after her that the lustres on the chandelier rattled, and for some seconds it sounded as if little invisible bells were ringing in the drawing-room.

Eight o'clock struck, the door opened, and Julie came in again. She had lost her look of exasperation, but now she put on an air of cold and determined resolution, which was still more formidable.

"Monsieur," she said, "I served your mother until the day of her death, and I have attended to you from your birth until now, and I think it may be said that I am devoted to the family." She waited for a reply, and Parent stammered:

"Why, yes, certainly, my good Julie."

"You know quite well," she continued, "that I never have done anything for the sake of money, but always for your sake; that I never have deceived you nor lied to you, that you never have had to find fault with me——"

"Certainly, my good Julie."

"Very well, then, Monsieur; it cannot go on any longer like this. I have said nothing, and left you in your ignorance, out of respect and liking for you, but it is too much, and every one in the neighborhood is laughing at you. Everybody knows about it, and so I must tell you also, though I do not like to repeat it. The reason that Madame comes

in at any time she chooses is that she is doing abominable things."

He seemed stupefied and not to understand, and could only stammer out: "Hold your tongue; you know I have forbidden you——"

But she interrupted him with irresistible resolution. "No, Monsieur, I must tell you everthing now. For a long time Madame has been carrying on with Monsieur Limousin. I have seen them kiss scores of times behind the door. Ah! you may be sure that if Monsieur Limousin had been rich, Madame never would have married Monsieur Parent. If you remember how the marriage was brought about, you will understand the matter from beginning to end."

Parent had risen, and stammered out, his face livid: "Hold your tongue—hold your tongue, or——"

She went on, however: "No, I mean to tell you everything. She married you from interest, and she deceived you from the very first day. It was all settled between them beforehand. You need only reflect for a few moments to understand it, and then, as she was not satisfied with having married you, as she did not love you, she has made your life miserable, so miserable that it has almost broken my heart when I have seen it."

He walked up and down the room with hands clenched, repeating: "Hold your tongue—hold your tongue——" For he could find nothing else

to say. The old servant, however, would not yield; she seemed resolved on everything.

George, who at first had been astonished and then frightened at those angry voices, began to utter shrill screams, and remained behind his father, with his face puckered up and his mouth open, roaring.

His son's screams exasperated Parent, and filled him with rage and courage. He rushed at Julie with both arms raised, ready to strike her, exclaiming: "Ah! you wretch! You will drive the child out of his senses." He already had his hand on her, when she screamed in his face:

"Monsieur, you may beat me if you like, me who reared you, but that will not prevent your wife from deceiving you, or alter the fact that your child is not yours——"

He stopped suddenly, let his arms fall, and remained standing opposite to her, so overwhelmed that he could understand nothing more.

"You need only to look at the child," she added, "to know who is its father! He is the very image of Monsieur Limousin. You need only look at his eyes and forehead. Why, a blind man could not be mistaken in him."

He had taken her by the shoulders, and was now shaking her with all his might. "Viper, viper!" he said. "Go out of the room, viper! Get out, or I shall kill you! Go out! Go!"

And with a desperate effort he threw her into the next room. She fell across the table, which was

laid for dinner, breaking the glasses. Then, rising to her feet, she put the table between her master and herself. While he was pursuing her, in order to take hold of her again, she flung terrible words at him.

"You need only go out this evening after dinner, and come in again immediately, and you will see! You will see whether I have been lying! Just try it, and you will see." She had reached the kitchen door and escaped, but he ran after her, up the back stairs to her bedroom, into which she had locked herself, and knocking at the door, he said:

"You will leave my house this very instant!"

"You may be certain of that, Monsieur," was her reply. "In an hour's time I shall not be here."

He then went slowly downstairs again, holding on to the banister so as not to fall, and went back to the drawing-room, where little George was sitting on the floor, crying. He fell into a chair and looked at the child with dull eyes. He understood nothing, knew nothing more; he felt dazed, stupefied, mad, as if he had just fallen on his head, and he hardly even remembered the dreadful things the servant had told him. Then, by degrees, his mind, like muddy water, became calmer and clearer, and the abominable revelations began to work in his heart.

He was no longer thinking of George. The child was quiet now and sitting on the carpet; but, seeing that no notice was taken of him, he began to cry.

His father ran to him, took him in his arms, and covered him with kisses. His child remained to him at any rate! What did the rest matter? He held him in his arms and pressed his lips to his light hair, and, relieved and composed, he said:

"George—my little George—my dear little George——" But he suddenly remembered what Julie had said! Yes, she had said that he was Limousin's child. Oh! it could not be possible, surely. He could not believe it, could not doubt, even for a moment, that he was his own child. It was one of those low scandals that spring from servants' brains! And he repeated: "George—my dear little George." The youngster was quiet again, now that his father was fondling him.

Parent felt the warmth of the little chest penetrate through his clothes, and it filled him with love, courage, and happiness; that gentle warmth soothed him, fortified him and saved him. Then he put the small, curly head away from him a little, and looked at it affectionately, still repeating: "George! Oh, my little George!" But suddenly he thought: "Suppose he were to resemble Limousin, after all!"

He looked at him with haggard, troubled eyes, and tried to discover whether there was any likeness in his forehead, in his nose, mouth, or cheeks. His thoughts wandered as they do when a person is going mad, and the child's face changed in his eyes, and assumed a strange look and improbable resemblances.

The hall bell rang. Parent gave a bound as if a bullet had gone through him. "There she is," he said. "What shall I do?" And he ran and locked himself up in his room, to have time to bathe his eyes. But in a few moments another ring at the bell made him jump again, and then he remembered that Julie had left, without the housemaid knowing it, and so nobody would go to open the door. What was he to do? He went himself, and suddenly he felt brave, resolute, ready for dissimulation and the struggle. The terrible blow had matured him in a few moments. He wished to know the truth, he desired it with the rage of a timid man, and with the tenacity of an easy-going man who has been exasperated.

Nevertheless, he trembled. Does one know how much excited cowardice there often is in boldness? He went to the door with furtive steps, and stopped to listen; his heart beat furiously. Suddenly, however, the noise of the bell over his head startled him like an explosion. He seized the lock, turned the key, and opening the door, saw his wife and Limousin standing before him on the stairs.

With an air of astonishment, which also betrayed a little irritation, she said:

"So you open the door now? Where is Julie?"

His throat felt tight and his breathing was labored as he tried in vain to reply.

"Are you dumb?" she continued. "I asked you where Julie is?"

"She—she—she—has—gone——" he managed to stammer.

His wife began to get angry. "Where do you mean by gone? Where has she gone? Why?" By degrees he regained his coolness. He felt an intense hatred rise up in him for that insolent woman who was standing before him.

"Yes, she has gone altogether. I sent her away."

"You have sent Julie away? Why, you must be mad."

"Yes, I sent her away because she was insolent, and because—because she was ill-using the child."

"Julie?"

"Yes—Julie."

"What was she insolent about?"

"About you."

"About me?"

"Yes, because the dinner was burned, and you did not come in."

"And she said——"

"She said—offensive things about you—which I ought not—which I could not listen to——"

"What did she say?"

"It is no good repeating them."

"I wish to hear them."

"She said it was unfortunate for a man like me to be married to a woman like you, unpunctual, careless, disorderly, a bad mother, and a bad wife."

The young woman had gone into the anteroom, followed by Limousin, who did not say a word at

this unexpected condition of things. She shut the door quickly, threw her cloak on a chair, and going straight up to her husband, she stammered out:

"You say? You say? That I am——"

Very pale and calm, he replied: "I say nothing, my dear. I am simply repeating what Julie said to me, as you wished to know what it was, and I wish you to remark that I turned her off just on account of what she said."

She trembled with a violent longing to tear out his beard and scratch his face. In his voice and manner she felt that he was asserting his position as master. Although she had nothing to say by way of reply, she tried to assume the offensive by saying something unpleasant. "I suppose you have had dinner?" she asked.

"No, I waited for you."

She shrugged her shoulders impatiently. "It is very stupid of you to wait after half-past seven," she said. "You might have guessed that I was detained, that I had a good many things to do, visits and shopping."

And then, suddenly, she felt that she needed to explain how she had spent her time, and told him in abrupt, haughty words that, having to buy some furniture in a shop a long distance off, very far off, in the Rue de Rennes, she had met Limousin at past seven o'clock on the Boulevard Saint-Germain, and that then she had gone with him to have something to eat in a restaurant, as she did not like to

go to one by herself, although she was faint with hunger. That was how she had dined with Limousin, if it could be called dining, for they had only some soup and half a chicken, as they were in a great hurry to get back.

Parent replied simply: "Well, you were quite right. I am not finding fault with you."

Then Limousin, who had not spoken till then, and who had been half hidden behind Henriette, came forward and put out his hand, saying: "Are you very well?"

Parent took his hand, and shaking it gently, replied: "Yes, I am very well."

But the young woman had felt a reproach in her husband's last words. "Finding fault! Why do you speak of finding fault? One might think you meant to imply something."

"Not at all," he replied, by way of excuse. "I simply meant that I was not at all anxious, although you were late, and that I did not find fault with you for it."

She, however, took a high hand, and tried to find a pretext for a quarrel. "Although I was late? One might really think it was one o'clock in the morning, and that I spent my nights away from home."

"Certainly not, my dear. I said late because I could find no other word. You said you should be back at half-past six, and you returned at half-past eight. That surely was being late. I understand it

perfectly well. I am not at all surprised, even. But—but—I can hardly use any other word."

"But you pronounce them as if I had been out all night."

"Oh, no—oh, no!"

She saw that he would yield on every point, and she was going into her own room, when at last she noticed that George was screaming, and then she asked, with some feeling: "What is the matter with the child?"

"I told you that Julie had been rather unkind to him."

"What has the wretch been doing to him?"

"Oh, nothing much. She gave him a push, and he fell down."

She wished to see her child, and ran into the dining-room, but stopped short at the sight of the table covered with spilled wine, with broken decanters and glasses and overturned saltcellars. "Who did all that mischief?" she asked.

"It was Julie, who——" But she interrupted him furiously:

"That is too much, really! Julie speaks of me as if I were a shameless woman, beats my child, breaks my plates and dishes, turns my house upside down, and it appears that you think it all quite natural."

"Certainly not, as I have got rid of her."

"Really! You have got rid of her! But you ought to have given her in charge. In such cases,

one ought to call in the Commissary of Police!"

"But—my dear—I really could not. There was no reason. It would have been very difficult——"

She shrugged her shoulders disdainfully. "There! you will never be anything but a poor, wretched fellow, a man without a will, without any firmness or energy. Ah! she must have said some nice things to you, your Julie, to make you turn her off like that. I should like to have been here for a minute, only for a minute." Then she opened the drawing-room door and ran to George, took him into her arms and kissed him, and said: "Georgie, what is it, my darling, my pretty one, my treasure?"

Then, suddenly turning to another idea, she said: "But the child has had no dinner? You have had nothing to eat, my pet?"

"No, mamma."

Then she again turned furiously upon her husband. "Why, you must be mad, utterly mad! It is half-past eight, and George has had no dinner!"

He excused himself as best he could, for he had nearly lost his wits by the overwhelming scene and the explanation, and felt crushed by this ruin of his life. "But, my dear, we were waiting for you, as I did not wish to dine without you. As you come home late every day, I expected you every moment."

She threw her bonnet, which she had kept on till then, into an easy-chair, and in an angry voice she

said: "It is really intolerable to have to do with people who can understand nothing, who can divine nothing and do nothing by themselves. So, I suppose, if I were to come in at twelve o'clock at night, the child would have had nothing to eat? Just as if you could not have understood that, as it was after half-past seven, I was prevented from coming home, that I had met with some hindrance!"

Parent trembled, for he felt that his anger was getting the upper hand, but Limousin interposed, and turning toward the young woman, said:

"My dear friend, you are altogether unjust. Parent could not guess that you would come here so late, as you never do so, and then, how could you expect him to get over the difficulty all himself, after having sent away Julie?"

But Henriette was very angry.

"Well, at any rate, he must get over the difficulty himself, for I will not help him," she replied. "Let him settle it!" And she went into her own room, quite forgetting that her child had not had anything to eat.

Limousin immediately set to work to help his friend. He picked up the broken glasses that strewed the table and took them out, replaced the plates and knives and forks, and put the child into his high chair, while Parent went to look for the chambermaid to wait at table. The girl came in, in great astonishment, as she had heard nothing in George's room, where she had been working. She

soon, however, brought in the soup, a burned leg of mutton, and mashed potatoes.

Parent sat by the side of the child, very much upset and distressed at all that had happened. He gave the boy his dinner, and endeavored to eat something himself, but he could swallow only with an effort, as his throat felt paralyzed. By degrees he was seized with an insane desire to look at Limousin, who was sitting opposite to him, making bread pellets, to see whether George was like him, but he did not venture to raise his eyes for some time. At last, however, he made up his mind to do so, and gave a quick, sharp look at the face he knew so well. It looked very different from what he had imagined. From time to time he looked at Limousin, trying to recognize a likeness in the smallest lines of his face, in the slightest features, and then he looked at his son, under the pretext of feeding him.

Two words were sounding in his ears: "His father! his father! his father!" They buzzed in his temples at every beat of his heart. Yes, that man, that tranquil man who was sitting on the other side of the table, was, perhaps, the father of his son, of George, of his little George. Parent left off eating; he could not swallow any more. A terrible pain, one of those attacks of pain which make men scream, roll on the ground, and bite the furniture, was tearing at his entrails, and he felt inclined to take a knife and plunge it into his stomach.

He started when he heard the door open. His wife came in. "I am hungry," she said; "are not you, Limousin?"

He hesitated a little, and then said: "Yes, I am, upon my word."

She had the leg of mutton brought in again. Parent asked himself:

"Have they had dinner? Or are they late because they have had a lovers' meeting?"

They both ate with a very good appetite. Henriette was very calm, but laughed and joked. Her husband watched her furtively. She wore a pink teagown trimmed with white lace, and her fair head, her white neck and her plump hands stood out from that coquettish and perfumed dress as if it were a sea-shell edged with foam.

What fun they must be making of him, if he had been their dupe since the first day! Was it possible to make a fool of a man, a worthy man, because his father had left him a little money? Why could one not see into people's souls? How was it that nothing revealed to upright hearts the deceits of infamous hearts? How was it that voices had the same sound for adoring as for lying? Why was a false, deceptive look the same as a sincere one? And he watched them, waiting to catch a gesture, a word, an intonation. Then suddenly he thought: "I will surprise them this evening," and he said: "My dear, as I have dismissed Julie, I will see about getting another maid this very day. I will go

at once to procure one by to-morrow morning, so I may not be in until late."

"Very well," she replied; "go. I shall not stir from here. Limousin will keep me company. We will wait for you." Then, turning to the maid, she said: "You had better put George to bed, and then you can clear away and go up to your room."

Parent had got up; he was unsteady on his legs, dazed and bewildered, and saying, "I shall see you again later," he went out, and the floor seemed to roll like a ship. George had been carried out by his nurse, while Henriette and Limousin went into the drawing-room.

As soon as the door was shut, he said: "You must be mad, surely, to torment your husband so."

She immediately turned on him: "Ah! Do you know I think the habit you have got into lately, of looking upon Parent as a martyr, is very unpleasant?"

Limousin threw himself into an easy-chair and crossed his legs. "I am not setting him up as a martyr in the least, but I think that, situated as we are, it is ridiculous to defy this man as you do, from morning till night."

She took a cigarette from the mantelpiece, lighted it, and replied: "But I do not defy him; quite the contrary. Only he irritates me by his stupidity, and I treat him as he deserves."

Limousin continued impatiently: "What you are doing is very foolish! I am only asking you to treat

your husband gently, because both of us require him to trust us. I think you ought to see that."

They were close together; he, tall, dark, with long whiskers and the rather vulgar manners of a good-looking man who is very well satisfied with himself; she, small, fair, and pink, a little Parisian, born in the back room of a shop, half cocotte and half bourgeoise, brought up to entice customers to the store by her glances, and married, in consequence, to a simple, unsophisticated man, who saw her outside the door every morning when he went out and every evening when he came home.

"But do you not understand, you great booby," she said, "that I hate him just because he married me, because he bought me, in fact; because everything that he says and does, everything that he thinks, acts on my nerves? He exasperates me every moment by his stupidity, which you call his kindness; by his dullness, which you call his confidence, and then, above all, because he is my husband, instead of you. I feel him between us, although he does not interfere with us much. And then—and then? No, it is, after all, too idiotic of him not to guess anything! I wish he would, at any rate, be a little jealous. There are moments when I feel inclined to say to him: 'Do you not see, you stupid creature, that Paul is my lover?'

"It is quite incomprehensible that you cannot understand how hateful he is to me, how he irritates me. You always seem to like him, and you shake

hands with him cordially. Men are very extraordinary at times."

"One must know how to dissimulate, my dear."

"It is no question of dissimulation, but of feeling. One might think that, when you men deceive one another, you like each other better on that account, while we women hate a man from the moment that we have betrayed him."

"I do not see why one should hate an excellent fellow because one is friendly with his wife."

"You do not see it? You do not see it? You all of you are wanting in refinement of feeling. However, that is one of those things which one feels and cannot express. And then, moreover, one ought not. No, you would not understand; it is quite useless! You men have no delicacy of feeling."

And smiling, with the gentle contempt of an impure woman, she put both her hands on his shoulders and held up her lips to him. He stooped down and clasped her closely in his arms, and their lips met. And as they stood in front of the mantel mirror, another couple exactly like them embraced behind the clock.

They had heard nothing, neither the noise of the key nor the creaking of the door, but suddenly Henriette, with a loud cry, pushed Limousin away with both her arms, and they saw Parent looking at them, livid with rage, without his shoes on and his hat over his forehead. He looked at each, one after

the other, with a quick glance and without moving his head. He appeared beside himself. Then, without saying a word, he threw himself on Limousin, seized him as if he were going to strangle him, and flung him into the opposite corner of the room so violently that the other lost his balance, and, beating the air with his hand, struck his head violently against the wall.

When Henriette saw that her husband was going to murder her lover, she threw herself on Parent, seized him by the neck, and digging her ten delicate, rosy fingers into his neck, she queezed him so tightly, with all the vigor of a desperate woman, that the blood spurted out under her nails, and she bit his shoulder, as if she wished to tear it with her teeth. Parent, half-strangled and choking, loosened his hold on Limousin, in order to shake off his wife, who was hanging to his neck. Putting his arms round her waist, he flung her also to the other end of the drawing-room.

Then, as his passion was short-lived, like that of most good-tempered men, and his strength was soon exhausted, he remained standing between the two, panting, worn out, not knowing what to do next. His brutal fury had expended itself in that effort, like the froth of a bottle of champagne, and his unwonted energy ended in a gasping for breath. As soon as he could speak, however, he said:

"Go away—both of you—immediately! Go!"

Limousin remained motionless in his corner,

against the wall, too startled to understand anything as yet, too frightened to move a finger; while Henriette, with her hands resting on a small, round table, her head bent forward, her hair hanging down, her bodice unfastened, waited like a wild animal which is about to spring. Parent continued in a stronger voice: "Go away immediately. Get out of the house!"

His wife, however, seeing that he had got over his first exasperation, grew bolder, drew herself up, took two steps toward him, and, grown almost insolent, she said: "Have you lost your head? What is the matter with you? What is the meaning of this unjustifiable violence?"

But he turned toward her, and raising his fist to strike her, he stammered out: "Oh—oh—this is too much, too much! I heard everything! Everything—do you understand? Everything! You wretch—you wretch! You are two wretches! Get out of the house, both of you! Immediately, or I shall kill you! Leave the house!"

She saw that it was all over, and that he knew everything; that she could not prove her innocence, and that she must comply. But all her imprudence had returned to her, and her hatred for the man which was aggravated now, drove her to audacity, made her feel the need of bravado, and of defying him, and she said in a clear voice: "Come, Limousin; as he is going to turn me out of doors, I will go to your lodgings with you."

But Limousin did not move, and Parent, in a fresh access of rage, cried out: "Go, will you? Go, you wretches! Or else—or else——" He seized a chair and whirled it over his head.

Henriette walked quickly across the room, took her lover by the arm, dragged him from the wall, to which he appeared fixed, and led him toward the door, saying: "Do come, my friend—you see that the man is mad. Do come!"

As she went out she turned round to her husband, trying to think of something that she could do, something that she could invent to wound him to the heart as she left the house, and an idea struck her, one of those venomous, deadly ideas in which all a woman's perfidy shows itself, and she said resolutely: "I am going to take my child with me."

Parent was stupefied, and stammered: "Your—your—child? You dare to talk of your child? You venture—you venture to ask for your child—after—after—— Oh, oh, that is too much! Go, you vile creature! Go!"

She went up to him again, almost smiling, almost avenged already, and defying him, standing close to him, and face to face, she said: "I want my child, and you have no right to keep him, because he is not yours—do you understand? He is not yours! He is Limousin's!"

And Parent cried out in bewilderment: "You lie—you lie—worthless woman!"

But she continued: "You fool! Everybody

knows it except you. I tell you, this is his father. You need only look at him to see it."

Parent staggered backward, and then he suddenly turned round, took a candle, and rushed into the next room; returning almost immediately, carrying little George wrapped up in his bedclothes. The child, who had been suddenly awakened, was crying from fright. Parent threw him into his wife's arms, and then, without speaking, he pushed her roughly out toward the stairs, where Limousin was waiting, from motives of prudence.

Then he shut the door again, double-locked and bolted it, but had scarcely got back into the drawing-room when he fell to the floor at full length.

Parent lived alone, quite alone. During the five weeks that followed their separation, the feeling of surprise at his new life prevented him from thinking much. He had resumed his bachelor life, his habits of lounging about, and took his meals at a restaurant. As he wished to avoid any scandal, he made his wife an allowance, which was arranged by their lawyers. By degrees, however, the thought of the child began to haunt him. Often, when he was at home alone at night, he suddenly thought he heard George calling out "Papa," and his heart would begin to beat, and he would get up quickly and open the door, to see whether, by chance, the child might have returned, as dogs or pigeons do.

Why should a child have less instinct than an animal? On finding that he was mistaken, he would sit in his armchair again and think of the boy. He would think of him for hours and whole days. It was not only a moral, but still more a physical obsession, a nervous longing to kiss him, to hold and fondle him, to take him on his knee and dance him. He felt the child's little arms around his neck, his little mouth pressing a kiss on his beard, his soft hair tickling his cheeks, and the remembrance of all those childish ways made him suffer as a man might for some beloved woman who has left him. Twenty or a hundred times a day he asked himself the question whether he was or was not George's father, and almost before he was in bed every night he resumed the same series of despairing questions.

He especially dreaded the darkness of evening, the melancholy twilight. Then a flood of sorrow invaded his heart, a torrent of despair which seemed to overwhelm him and drive him mad. He was afraid of his own thoughts as men are of criminals, and he fled before them. Above all things, he feared his empty, dark, horrible dwelling and the deserted streets, in which, here and there, a gas-lamp flickered, where the isolated foot passenger whom one hears in the distance seems to be a night prowler, and makes one walk faster or slower, as he may be coming toward you or following you.

In spite of himself, and by instinct, Parent

went in the direction of the broad, well-lighted, populous streets. The light and the crowd attracted him, occupied his mind and distracted his thoughts, and when he was tired of walking aimlessly among the moving crowd, when he saw the foot passengers becoming more scarce and the pavements less crowded, the fear of solitude and silence drove him into some large café full of drinkers and of light. He went there as flies go to a candle, and he would sit down at one of the little round tables and ask for a "bock," which he drank slowly, feeling uneasy every time a customer got up to go. He would have liked to take him by the arm, hold him back, and beg him to stay a little longer, so much did he dread the time when the waiter should come up to him and say sharply: "Come, Monsieur, it is closing-time!"

He thus got into the habit of going to the beer-houses, where the continual elbowing of the drinkers brings you in contact with a familiar and silent public, where the heavy clouds of tobacco smoke lull disquietude, while the heavy beer dulls the mind and calms the heart. He almost lived there. Early in the day he went there to find people to distract his glances and his thoughts, and soon, as he felt too lazy to move, he took his meals there.

After every meal, for more than an hour, he sipped three or four small glasses of brandy, which stupefied him by degrees, and then his head drooped on his chest, he shut his eyes, and slept. Awak-

ing, he raised himself on the red velvet seat, straightened his waistcoat, pulled down his cuffs, and took up the newspapers again, though he had seen them in the morning, and read them through again, from beginning to end. Between four and five o'clock he went for a walk on the boulevards, to get a little fresh air, as he used to say, and then came back to the seat that had been reserved for him, and asked for absinthe. He would talk to the regular customers whose acquaintance he had made. They discussed the news of the day and political events, and that carried him on till dinner time; and he spent the evening as he had spent the afternoon, until it was time to close. That was a terrible moment for him when he was obliged to go out into the dark, into the emtpy room full of dreadful recollections, of horrible thoughts, and of mental agony. He no longer saw any of his old friends, any of his relatives, anybody who might remind him of his past life. But as his apartments were a hell to him, he took a good room on the ground floor in a large hotel, so as to see the passers-by. He was no longer alone in that great building. He felt people swarming round him, he heard voices in the adjoining rooms, and when his former sufferings tormented him too much at the sight of his bed, which was turned back, and of his solitary fireplace, he went out into the wide passages and walked up and down them like a sentinel, before all the closed doors, and looked sadly at the

shoes standing in couples outside them, women's little boots by the side of men's thick ones, and he thought that, no doubt, all these people were happy, and were sleeping in their warm beds.

Five miserable years passed thus. But one day, when he was taking his usual walk between the Madeleine and the Rue Drouot, he suddenly saw a lady whose bearing struck him. A tall gentleman and a child were with her, and all three were walking in front of him. He asked himself where he had seen them before, when suddenly he recognized a movement of her hand; it was his wife, his wife with Limousin and little George.

His heart beat as if it would suffocate him, but he wished to see them, and he followed them. They looked like a family of the better middle class; Henriette was leaning on Paul's arm, speaking to him in a low voice, and looking at him sidewise occasionally. Parent got a side view of her and recognized her pretty features, the movements of her lips, her smile, and her coaxing glances. But the child chiefly took up his attention. How tall and strong he was! Parent could not see his face, but only his long, fair curls. That tall boy with bare legs, who was walking by his mother's side like a little man, was George.

He saw them suddenly, as they stopped in front of a shop. Limousin had grown very gray, had aged, and was thinner; his wife, on the contrary, was as young-looking as ever, and had grown

stouter. George he would not have recognized, he was so different from what he had been formerly.

They passed on, and Parent followed them. He walked on quickly, passed them, and then turned round, so as to meet them face-to-face. As he passed the child he felt a mad longing to take him into his arms and run off with him, and he knocked against him as if by accident. The boy turned round and looked at the clumsy man angrily, and Parent hurried away, shocked, hurt, and pursued by that look. He went off like a thief, seized with a fear lest he might have been seen and recognized by his wife and her lover. He went to his café at once, and fell breathless into his chair. That evening he drank three absinthes.

For four months he felt the pain of that meeting in his heart. Every night he saw the three again, happy and tranquil, father, mother, and child walking on the boulevard before going in to dinner, and that new vision effaced the old one. It was another matter, another hallucination now, and also a fresh pain. Little George, the child he had so much loved and so often kissed, disappeared in the far distance, and he saw a new one, like a brother of the first, a little boy with bare legs, who did not know him! The child's love was dead; there was no bond between them; he had even looked at him angrily.

Then by degrees he grew calmer, his mental torture diminished, the image that had appeared to his

eyes and haunted his nights became more indistinct and less frequent. He began once more to live much like everybody else, like all those idle people who drink beer off marble-topped tables and wear out their clothes on the threadbaré velvet of the couches.

He grew old amid the smoke from pipes, lost his hair under the gas-lights, looked upon his weekly bath, on his fortnightly visit to the barber's to have his hair cut, and on the purchase of a new coat or hat, as an event. When he reached his café in a new hat he would look at himself in the glass a long time before sitting down, and take it off and put it on again several times, and at last ask his friend, the lady at the bar, who was watching him with interest, whether she thought it suited him.

Two or three times a year he went to the theater, and in the summer he spent some evenings at one of the open-air concerts in the Champs-Elysées. And so the years followed one another, slow, monotonous, and short, because they were uneventful.

He very rarely now thought of the dreadful drama that had wrecked his life; for twenty years had passed since that terrible evening. But the life he had led since then had worn him out. The landlord of his café often said to him: "You ought to pull yourself together a little, Monsieur Parent; you should get some fresh air and go into the country. I assure you that you have changed very much in the last few months." And when

his customer had gone out he used to say to the barmaid: "That poor Monsieur Parent is booked for another world; it is bad never to get out of Paris. Advise him to go out of town for a day occasionally; he has confidence in you. Summer will soon be here; that will put him straight."

And she, full of pity and kindness for such a regular customer, said to Parent one day: "Come, Monsieur, make up your mind to get a little fresh air. It is so charming in the country when the weather is fine. Oh, if I could, I would spend my life there!"

By degrees he became possessed with a vague desire to go just once and see whether it was really as pleasant there as she said, outside the walls of the great city. One morning he said to her:

"Do you know where one can get a good luncheon in the neighborhood of Paris?"

"Go to the Terrace at Saint-Germain; it is delightful there!"

He had been there formerly, when he became engaged. He made up his mind to go there again, and he chose a Sunday, for no special reason, but merely because people usually do go out on Sundays, even when they have nothing to do all the week; and so one Sunday morning he went to Saint-Germain. He was thirsty; he would have liked to get out at every station and sit down in the café that he saw outside and drink a "bock" or two, and then take the first train back to Paris.

The journey seemed very long. He could remain sitting for whole days, while he had the same motionless objects before his eyes, but he found it very trying and fatiguing to remain sitting while he was being whirled along, and to see the country fly by while he himself was motionless.

However, he found the Seine interesting every time he crossed it. Under the bridge at Chatou he saw some small boats going at great speed under the vigorous strokes of the bare-armed oarsmen, and he thought: "There are some fellows who are certainly enjoying themselves!" The train entered the tunnel just before it reached the station at Saint-Germain, and presently stopped at the platform. Parent got out, and walked slowly, for already he felt tired, toward the Terrace, with his hands behind his back, and when he got to the iron balustrade, he stopped to look at the distant horizon. The immense plain spread out before him vast as the sea, green and studded with large villages, almost as populous as towns. The sun bathed the whole landscape in its full, warm light. The Seine winding like an endless serpent through the plain, flowed round the villages and along the slopes. Parent inhaled the warm breeze, which seemed to make his heart young again, to enliven his spirit, and to vivify his blood, and said to himself:

"It is delightful here."

Then he took a few steps, and stopped again to look about him. The utter misery of his exist-

ence seemed to be brought into full relief by the intense light that inundated the landscape. He saw his twenty years of café life—dull monotonous, heart-breaking. He might have traveled as others did, have gone among foreigners to unknown countries beyond the sea, have interested himself somewhat in everything that other men are passionately devoted to, in arts and science; he might have enjoyed life in a thousand forms, that mysterious life which is either charming or painful, constantly changing, always inexplicable and strange. Now, however, it was too late. He would go on drinking "bock" after "bock" until he died, without any family, without friends, without hope, without any curiosity about anything, and he was seized with a feeling of misery and a wish to run away, to hide himself in Paris, in his café and lethargy! All the thoughts, all the dreams, all the desires that are dormant in the slough of stagnating hearts had reawakened, brought to life by those rays of sunlight on the plain.

Parent felt that if he were to remain there any longer he should lose his reason, and he made haste to get to the Pavillon Henri IV for luncheon to try to forget his troubles under the influence of wine and alcohol, and at any rate to have someone to speak to.

He took a small table in one of the arbors, from which one can see all the surrounding country, ordered his luncheon, and asked to be served at once.

Then some more persons arrived and sat down at tables near him. He felt more comfortable; he was no longer alone. Three persons were eating near him. He looked at them two or three times without seeing them clearly, as one looks at total strangers. Suddenly a woman's voice sent a shiver through him which seemed to penetrate to his very marrow.

"George," it had said, "will you carve the chicken?"

And another voice replied: "Yes, mamma."

Parent looked up, and understood; he guessed immediately who those persons were! He should certainly not have known them again. His wife had grown quite white and very stout, an elderly, serious, respectable lady, and she held her head forward as she ate, for fear of spotting her dress, although she had a table napkin tucked under her chin. George had become a man. He had a slight beard, that uneven and almost colorless beard which adorns the cheeks of youths. He wore a high hat, a white waistcoat, and a monocle, because it looked "swell," no doubt. Parent looked at him in astonishment. Was that George, his son? No, he did not know that young man; there could be nothing in common between them. Limousin had his back to him, and was eating, with his shoulders rather bent.

All three appeared happy and satisfied; they came and took luncheon in the country at well-known restaurants. They had had a calm and pleasant existence, a family existence in a warm

and comfortable house, filled with all those trifles which make life agreeable, with affection, with those tender words which people exchange continually when they love each other. They had lived thus, thanks to him, Parent, on his money, after deceiving him, robbing him, ruining him! They had condemned him, the innocent, simple-minded, jovial man, to all the miseries of solitude, to that abominable life which he had led between the pavement and the counter, to every mental torture and every physical misery! They had made him a useless, aimless being, a waif in the world, a poor old man without any pleasures, any prospects, expecting nothing from anybody or anything. For him, the world was empty, because he loved nothing in the world. He might go among other nations, or go about the streets, go into all the houses in Paris, open every room, but he would not find inside any door the beloved face, the face of wife or child, which smiles when it sees you. This idea worked upon him more than any other, the idea of a door that one opens to see and to embrace somebody behind it.

And that was the fault of those three wretches! The fault of that worthless woman, of that infamous friend, and of that tall, light-haired lad who put on insolent airs. Now he felt as angry with the child as with the other two. Was he not Limousin's son? Would Limousin have kept him and loved him otherwise? Would not Limousin very

quickly have got rid of the mother and of the child if he had not felt sure that it was his, positively his? Does anybody bring up other people's children? And now they were there, quite close to him, those three who had made him suffer so much.

Parent looked at them, irritated and excited at the recollection of all his sufferings and of his despair, and was especially exasperated at their placid and satisfied looks. He felt inclined to kill them, to throw his siphon of Seltzer water at them, to split open Limousin's head as he every moment bent it over his plate, raising it again immediately.

He would have his revenge now, on the spot, as he had them under his hand. But how? He tried to think of some means, he pictured such dreadful things as one reads of in the newspapers occasionally, but could not hit on anything practical. And he went on drinking to excite himself, to give himself courage not to allow such an opportunity to escape him, as he might never have another.

Suddenly an idea struck him, a terrible idea; and he left off drinking to mature it. He smiled as he murmured: "I have them! I have them! We shall see! We shall see!"

They finished their luncheon slowly, conversing with unconcern. Parent could not hear what they were saying, but he saw their quiet gestures. His wife's face especially exasperated him. She had assumed a haughty air, the air of a comfortable

woman, of an unapproachable, devout woman, sheathed in principles, iron-clad in virtue. They paid their bill and rose from the table. Parent then noticed Limousin. He might have been taken for a retired diplomat, for he looked a man of great importance, with his soft white whiskers, the tips of which touched his coat-collar.

They walked away. Parent rose and followed them. First they went up and down the terrace, and calmly admired the landscape, and then they went into the forest. Parent followed them at a distance, hiding himself so as not to excite their suspicion too soon.

Parent came up to them by degrees, breathing hard with emotion and fatigue, for he was unused to walking now. He soon came up to them, but was seized with fear, an inexplicable fear, and he passed them, so as to turn round and meet them face-to-face. He walked on, his heart beating, feeling that they were just behind him now, and he said to himself: "Come, now is the time. Courage! courage! Now is the moment!"

He turned round. They were all three sitting on the grass, at the foot of a huge tree, and were still chatting. He made up his mind, and walked back rapidly; stopping in front of them in the middle of the road, he said abruptly, in a voice broken by emotion:

"It is I! Here I am! I suppose you did not expect me?"

They all stared at this man, who seemed to be insane. He continued:

"One would suppose that you did not know me again. Just look at me! I am Parent, Henri Parent. You thought it was all over, and that you would never see me again. Ah! but here I am once more, and now we will have an explanation."

Henriette, terrified, hid her face in her hands, murmuring: "Oh! Good heavens!"

Seeing this stranger, who seemed to be threatening his mother, George sprang up, ready to seize him by the collar. Limousin, thunderstruck, looked at the apparition in horror, who, after gasping for breath, continued:

"So now we will have an explanation; the proper moment has come! Ah! you deceived me, you condemned me to the life of a convict, and you thought that I should never catch you!"

The young man took him by the shoulders and pushed him back.

"Are you mad?" he asked. "What do you want? Go on your way immediately, or I shall give you a thrashing!"

"What do I want?" replied Parent. "I want to tell you who these people are."

George, however, was in a rage, and shook him, and was even going to strike him.

"Let me go," said Parent. "I am your father. There, see whether they recognize me now, the wretches!"

The young man, thunderstruck, unclenched his fists and turned toward his mother. Parent, as soon as he was released, approached her.

"Well," he said, "tell him yourself who I am! Tell him that my name is Henri Parent, that I am his father because his name is George Parent, because you are my wife, because you are all three living on my money, on the allowance of ten thousand francs which I have made you since I drove you out of my house. Will you tell him also why I drove you out? Because I surprised you with this beggar, this wretch, your lover! Tell him what I was, an honorable man, whom you married for money, and whom you deceived from the very first day. Tell him who you are, and who I am——"

He stammered and gasped for breath in his rage. The woman exclaimed in a heartrending voice:

"Paul, Paul, stop him; make him be quiet! Do not let him say this before my son!"

Limousin had also risen to his feet. He said in a very low voice:

"Hold your tongue! Do you understand what you are doing?"

"I know quite well what I am doing," resumed Parent, "and that is not all. There is one thing that I will know, something that has tormented me for twenty years." Then, turning to George, who was leaning against a tree in consternation, he said:

"Listen to me. When she left my house she

thought it was not enough to have deceived me, but she also wanted to drive me to despair. You were my only consolation, and she took you with her, swearing that I was not your father, but that he was your father. Was she lying? I do not know. I have been asking myself the question for the last twenty years."

He went close up to her, tragic and terrible, and, pulling away her hands, with which she had covered her face, he continued:

"Well, now! I call upon you to tell me which of us two is the father of this young man; he or I, your husband or your lover. Come! tell us."

Limousin rushed at him. Parent pushed him back, and, sneering in his fury, he said: "Ah! you are brave now! You are braver than you were that day when you ran downstairs because you thought I was going to murder you. Very well! If she will not reply, tell me yourself. You ought to know as well as she. Tell me, are you this young fellow's father? Come! Tell me!"

He turned to his wife again.

"If you will not tell me, at any rate tell your son. He is a man, now, and he has the right to know who is his father. I do not know, and I never did know, never, never! I cannot tell you, my boy."

He seemed to be losing his senses; his voice grew shrill and he worked his arms about as if he had an epileptic fit.

"Come! Give me an answer. She does not

know. I will make a bet that she does not know. No, she does not know, by Jove! Ha! ha! ha! Nobody knows—nobody. How can one know such things? You will not know either, my boy, you will not know any more than I do—never. Look here, ask her—you will find that she does not know. I do not know either, nor does he, nor do you, nobody knows. You can choose—you can choose—yes, you can choose—him or me. Choose. Good evening. It is all over. If she makes up her mind to tell you, you will come and let me know, will you not? I am living at the Hôtel des Continents. I should be glad to know. Good evening. I hope you will enjoy yourselves very much."

And he went away gesticulating, talking to himself under the tall trees, in the quiet, the cool air, which was full of the fragrance of growing plants. He did not turn around to look at them, but went straight on, walking under the stimulus of his rage, under a storm of passion, with that one fixed idea in his mind. All at once he found himself outside the station. A train was about to start, and he got in. During the journey his anger calmed down, he regained his senses and returned to Paris, astonished at his own boldness, full of aches and pains as if he had broken some bones. Nevertheless, he went to have a "bock" at his brewery.

When she saw him come in, Mademoiselle Zoé asked in surprise: "What! back already? are you tired?"

"Yes—yes, I am tired—very tired. You know, when one is not used to going out—I've had enough of it. I shall not go into the country again. It would have been better to stay here. For the future, I shall not stir out."

She could not persuade him to tell her about his little excursion, much as she wished to.

For the first time in his life he got thoroughly drunk that night, and had to be carried home.

MISS HARRIET

SEVEN of us were on a drag, four women and three men; one of the latter sat beside the coachman. We were ascending, at snail's pace, the winding road up the steep cliff along the coast.

Setting out from Etretat at break of day to visit the ruins of Tancarville, we were still half asleep, benumbed by the fresh air. The women especially, who were little accustomed to these early excursions, half opened and closed their eyes every moment, nodding their heads or yawning, insensible to the beauties of the dawn.

It was autumn. On both sides of the road stretched the bare fields, yellowed by the stubble of wheat and oats that covered the soil like a badly shaved beard. The moist earth seemed to steam. Larks were singing, high in the air, while other birds piped in the bushes.

The sun rose in front of us, bright red on the plane of the horizon; and in proportion as it ascended, growing clearer from minute to minute, the country seemed to awake, to smile, to shake itself, like a young girl leaving her bed in her white

robe of vapor. The Comte d'Etraille, who was seated on the box, cried:

"Look! look! a hare!" and he extended his arm toward the left, pointing to a patch of clover. The animal scurried along, almost hidden by the clover, only its large ears showing. Then it swerved across a furrow, stopped, went off again at full speed, changed its course, stopped anew, uneasy, spying out every danger, uncertain what route to take; when suddenly it began to run with great bounds, disappearing finally in a large patch of beet-root. All the men had wakened up to watch the course of the animal.

René Lamanoir exclaimed:

"We are not at all gallant this morning," and, regarding his neighbor, the little Baroness de Sérennes, who struggled against sleep, he said to her in a low tone: "You are thinking of your husband, Baroness. Reassure yourself; he will not return before Saturday, so you have still four days."

She answered with a sleepy smile:

"How stupid you are!" Then, shaking off her torpor, she added: "Now, let somebody say something to make us laugh. You, Monsieur Chenal, who are reputed to have had more love affairs than the Duc de Richelieu, tell us a love story in which you have played a part; anything you like."

Léon Chenal, an old painter, who had once been very handsome, very strong, very proud of his physique, and very popular with women, took his long

white beard in his hand and smiled; then, after a few moments' reflection, he became serious.

"Ladies, it will not be an amusing tale; for I am going to relate to you the saddest love affair of my life, and I sincerely hope that none of my friends may ever have a similar experience.

"I was twenty-five years of age, and was pillaging along the coast of Normandy. I call 'pillaging' wandering about, with a knapsack, from inn to inn, under the pretext of making studies and sketching landscapes. I know nothing more enjoyable than that happy-go-lucky wandering life, in which one is perfectly free, without shackles of any kind, without care, without preoccupation, without even thinking of the morrow. One goes in any direction he pleases, without any guide save his fancy, or any counsellor save his eyes. One stops because a running brook attracts him, because the smell of frying potatoes tickles one's olfactories on passing an inn. Sometimes it is the perfume of clematis which decides one in his choice, or the roguish glance of the servant at an inn. Do not despise me for my affection for these rustics. These girls have a soul as well as senses, not to mention firm cheeks and fresh lips; while their hearty and willing kisses have the flavor of wild fruit. Love is always love, come whence it may. A heart that beats at your approach, an eye that weeps when you go away, are things so rare, so sweet, so precious, that they must never be despised.

"I have had rendezvous in ditches full of primroses, behind cowstables, and in barns on the straw, still warm from the heat of the day. I have recollections of coarse gray cloth, covering supple peasant skin, and regrets for simple, frank kisses, more delicate in their unaffected sincerity than the subtle favors of charming and distinguished women.

"But what one loves most amid all these varied adventures is the country, the woods, the rising of the sun, the twilight, the moonlight. These are, for the painter, honeymoon trips with nature. One is alone with her in that long and quiet association. You go to sleep in the fields, amid marguerites and poppies, and, with eyes wide open, on a sunny day you descry in the distance the little village, with its pointed clock-tower which sounds the hour of noon.

"You sit by the side of a spring that gushes out at the foot of an oak, amid a growth of tall, slender weeds, glistening with life. You go down on your knees, bend forward, and drink that cold, pellucid water which wets your moustache and nose; you drink it with a physical pleasure as if you kissed the spring, lip to lip. Sometimes, when you find a deep hole along the course of these tiny brooks, you plunge in quite naked, and you feel from head to foot, an icy and delicious caress, the light and gentle quivering of the stream.

"You are gay on the hills, melancholy on the edge of ponds, inspired when the sun is setting in an

ocean of blood-red clouds and casts red reflections on the river. And at night, under the moon, which passes across the vault of heaven, you think of a thousand strange things that would never have occurred to you under the brilliant light of day.

"So, in wandering through the same country where we are this year, I came to the little village of Benouville, on the cliff, between Yport and Etretat. I came from Fécamp, following the coast, a high coast, perpendicular as a wall, with its chalk cliffs descending perpendicularly into the sea. I had walked since early morning on the short grass, smooth and yielding as a carpet, that grows on the edge of the cliff. And, singing lustily, I walked with long strides, looking sometimes at the slow circling flight of a gull with its white curved wings outlined on the blue sky, sometimes at the brown sails of a fishing-bark on the green sea. In short, I had passed a happy day, a day of liberty and freedom from care.

"A little farmhouse where travelers were lodged was pointed out to me, a kind of inn, kept by a peasant woman, which stood in the center of a Norman courtyard surrounded by a double row of beeches.

"Leaving the coast, I reached the hamlet, which was hemmed in by great trees, and presented myself at the house of Mother Lecacheur.

"She was an old, wrinkled, and stern peasant woman, who seemed always to receive customers under protest, with a kind of defiance.

"It was May, and the spreading apple-trees covered the court with a shower of blossoms which rained unceasingly upon people and grass.

"I said: 'Madame Lecacheur, have you a room for me?'

"Astonished to find that I knew her name, she answered:

" 'That depends; everything is let; but all the same I can find out.'

"In five minutes we had come to an agreement, and I deposited my bag upon the earthen floor of a rustic room, furnished with a bed, two chairs, a table, and a washbowl. The room looked into the large, smoky kitchen, where the lodgers took their meals with the people of the farm and the landlady, who was a widow.

"I washed my hands, and then went out. The old woman was making a chicken fricasse for dinner in the large fireplace, in which hung the iron pot, black with smoke.

" 'You have travelers, then?' said I to her.

"She answered, in an offended tone of voice:

'I have a lady, an English lady, who has reached years of maturity. She occupies the other room.'

"I obtained, by means of an extra five sous a day, the privilege of dining out in the court when the weather was fine.

"My place was set outside the door, and I was beginning to gnaw the lean limbs of the Normandy

chicken, to drink the clear cider, and to munch the hunk of white bread, which was four days old, but excellent.

"Suddenly the wooden gate that gave on the highway was opened, and a strange lady directed her steps toward the house. She was very thin, very tall, so tightly enveloped in a red Scotch plaid shawl that one might have supposed she had no arms, if one had not seen a long hand just above the hips, holding a white tourist's umbrella. Her face was like that of a mummy, surrounded with curls of gray hair, which tossed about at every step she took, and made me think, I know not why, of a pickled herring in curl-papers. Lowering her eyes, she passed quickly in front of me, and entered the house.

"That singular apparition cheered me. She undoubtedly was my neighbor, the English lady of mature age of whom our hostess had spoken.

"I did not see her again that day. The next day, when I had settled myself to begin painting, at the end of that beautiful valley which you know and which extends as far as Etretat, I perceived, on lifting my eyes suddenly, something singular standing on the crest of the cliff; one might have said, a pole decked out with flags. It was she. On seeing me, she suddenly disappeared. I re-entered the house at midday for luncheon and took my seat at the general table, so as to make the acquaintance of this odd character. But she did not respond to

my polite advances, was insensible even to my little attentions. I persistently poured out water for her, I passed her the dishes with great eagerness. A slight, almost imperceptible, movement of the head and an English word, murmured so low that I did not understand it, were her only acknowledgments.

"I ceased occupying myself with her, although she had disturbed my thoughts.

"At the end of three days I knew as much about her as did Madame Lecacheur herself.

"She was called Miss Harriet. Seeking for a secluded village in which to pass the summer, she had been attracted to Benouville six months before, and did not appear disposed to leave it. She never spoke at table, ate rapidly, reading all the while a small book of Protestant propaganda. She gave a copy of it to everybody. The *curé* himself had received four copies, conveyed by an urchin to whom she had paid two sous' commission. She said sometimes to our hostess, abruptly, without in the least preparing her for the declaration:

" 'I love the Saviour more than all. I admire Him in all creation; I adore Him in all nature; I carry Him always in my heart.'

"And she would immediately present the old woman with one of her tracts which were destined to convert the universe.

"In the village she was not liked. In fact, the schoolmaster had pronounced her an atheist, and a kind of stigma attached to her. The *curé,* who had

been consulted by Madame Lecacheur, responded:

"'She is a heretic, but God does not wish the death of the sinner, and I believe her to be a person of pure morals.'

"These words, 'atheist,' 'heretic,' which no one can precisely define, threw doubts into some minds. It was asserted, however, that this English woman was rich, and that she had passed her life in traveling through the world, because her family had cast her off. Why had her family cast her off? Because of her impiety, of course.

"She was, in fact, one of those persons of exalted principles, one of those opinionated puritans, of which England produces so many, one of those good and insupportable old maids who haunt the *table d'hôte* of every hotel in Europe, who spoil Italy, poison Switzerland, render the charming cities of the Mediterranean uninhabitable, carry everywhere their fantastic manias, manners of petrified vestals, their indescribable toilets, and a certain odor of india-rubber, which makes one believe that at night they are slipped into a rubber casing.

"Whenever I caught sight of one of these individuals in a hotel, I fled like the birds that see a scarecrow in a field.

"This woman, however, appeared so very singular that she did not displease me.

"Madame Lecacheur, hostile by instinct to everything that was not rustic, felt in her narrow soul a kind of hatred for the ecstatic declarations of the

old maid. She had found a phrase by which to describe her, a term of contempt that rose to her lips, called forth by I know not what confused and mysterious mental ratiocination. She said: 'That woman is a demoniac.' This epithet, applied to that austere and sentimental creature, seemed to me irresistibly droll. I myself never called her anything now but 'the demoniac,' and I found a singular pleasure in pronouncing this word aloud on perceiving her.

"One day I asked Mother Lecacheur: 'What is our demoniac about to-day?'

"To which my rustic friend replied, shocked:

" 'What do you think, sir? She picked up a toad that had had its paw crushed, and carried it to her room, and has put it in her washbasin, and bandaged it as if it were a man. If that is not profanation, I should like to know what is!'

"On another occasion, when walking along the shore, she bought a large fish which had just been caught, simply to throw it back into the sea. The sailor from whom she had bought it, although she paid him handsomely, began to swear at her, more exasperated, indeed, than if she had put her hand into his pocket and taken his money. For more than a month he could not speak of the circumstance without denouncing it as an outrage. Oh, yes! She was indeed a demoniac, this Miss Harriet, and Mother Lecacheur must have had an inspiration in thus christening her.

"The stable-boy, who was called Sapeur, because he had served in Africa in his youth, entertained other opinions. He said, with a roguish air: 'She is an old hag who has seen life.'

"If the poor woman had but known!

"The little kind-hearted Céleste did not wait upon her willingly, but I never was able to understand why. Probably her only reason was that she was a stranger, of another race, of a different tongue, and of another religion.

"She wandered about the country, adoring and seeking God in nature. I found her one evening on her knees in a cluster of bushes. Having discovered something red through the leaves, I brushed aside the branches, and Miss Harriet at once rose to her feet, confusd at having been found thus, and fixed on me terrified eyes like those of an owl surprised in open day.

"Sometimes, when I was working among the rocks, I suddenly descried her on the edge of the cliff like a lighthouse. She would gaze in rapture at the vast sea, glittering in the sunlight, and the boundless sky with its golden-red tints. Sometimes I distinguished her at the end of the valley, walking quickly, with her elastic English step; and I would go toward her, attracted by I know not what, simply to see her illuminated visage, her dried-up, ineffable features, which seemed to glow with profound happiness.

"I often encountered her also in the corner of a field, sitting on the grass under the shadow of an

apple-tree, with her religious booklet open on her knee while she gazed into the distance.

"I could not tear myself away from that quiet country neighborhood, to which I was attached by a thousand links of love for its wide and peaceful landscape. I was happy in this sequestered farm, but in touch with the earth, the good, beautiful, green earth. And—must I avow it?—there was, besides, a little curiosity which retained me at the residence of Mother Lecacheur. I wished to become acquainted a little with this strange Miss Harriet, and to know what takes place in the solitary souls of those wandering old English women.

"We became acquainted in a singular manner. I had just finished a study which appeared to me to be worth something; and so it was, as fifteen years later it sold for ten thousand francs. It was as simple, however, as two and two make four, and was not according to academic rules. The whole right side of my canvas represented an enormous rock, covered with sea-wrack, brown, yellow, and red, across which the sun poured like a stream of oil. The light fell upon the rock as if it were aflame, without the sun, which was at my back, being visible. That was all. A first bewildering study of blazing and gorgeous light.

"On the left was the sea, not the blue sea, the slate-colored sea, but a sea of jade, greenish, milky and solid beneath the deep-colored sky.

"I was so pleased with my work that I danced from sheer delight as I carried it back to the inn. I should have liked the whole world to see it at once. I showed it to a cow which was browsing by the wayside, exclaiming as I did so: 'Look at that, my old beauty; you will not often see its like again.'

"When I had reached the house I immediately shouted to Mother Lecacheur:

" 'Hello, there! Mrs. Landlady, come and look at this.'

"The rustic advanced and regarded my work with her stupid eyes, which distinguished nothing, and could not even recognize whether the picture represented an ox or a house.

"Miss Harriet just then came home, and she passed behind me as I was holding out my canvas at arm's length, exhibiting it to our landlady. The demoniac could not help seeing it, for I took care to exhibit the thing in such a way that it could not escape her notice. She stopped abruptly and stood motionless, astonished. It was her rock that was depicted, the one she climbed to dream away her time undisturbed.

"She uttered a British 'Aoh,' which was at once so accentuated and so flattering that I turned to her, smiling, and said:

" 'This is my latest study, Mademoiselle.'

"She murmured rapturously, comically, and tenderly:

" 'Oh, Monsieur, you understand nature as a living thing.'

"I colored, and was more touched by that compliment than if it had come from a queen. I was captured, conquered, vanquished. I could have embraced her, upon my honor.

"I took my seat at table beside her, as usual. For the first time she spoke, thinking aloud:

" 'Oh! I do love nature.'

"I passed her some bread, some water, some wine. She now accepted these with a little smile of a mummy. I then talked about the scenery.

"We rose from the table together and walked leisurely across the court; then, attracted, doubtless, by the fiery glow which the setting sun cast over the surface of the sea, I opened the gate that led to the beach, and we walked along side-by-side, as contented as two persons might be who have just learned to understand and penetrate each other's motives and feelings.

"It was one of those warm, soft evenings which impart a sense of ease to flesh and spirit alike. All is enjoyment; everything charms. The balmy air, laden with the perfume of grasses and the smell of seaweed, soothes the olfactory sense with its wild fragrance, soothes the palate with its sea savor, soothes the mind with its pervading sweetness.

"We were now walking along the edge of the cliff, above the boundless sea, which rolled its little waves below us at a distance of a hundred

meters. And we inhaled that fresh breeze, briny from kissing the waves, that came from the ocean and passed across our faces.

"Wrapped in her plaid shawl, with a look of inspiration as she faced the breeze, the Englishwoman gazed fixedly at the great sun-ball descending toward the horizon. Far in the distance, a three-master in full sail was outlined on the blood-red sky, and a steamship, somewhat nearer, passed along, leaving behind it a trail of smoke. The red sun-globe sank slowly lower and lower and presently touched the water just behind the motionless vessel, which, in its dazzling effulgence, appeared to be framed in fire. We saw it plunge, grow smaller, and disappear, swallowed up by the ocean.

"Miss Harriet gazed in rapture at the last gleams of the dying day. She seemed longing to embrace the sky, the sea, the whole landscape.

"She murmured: 'Aoh! I love—I love—' I saw a tear in her eye. She continued: 'I wish I were a little bird, so that I could mount up into the firmament.'

"She remained standing as I had often seen her, perched on the cliff, her face as red as her shawl. I should have liked to sketch her in my album. It would have been a caricature of ecstasy.

"I turned away, so as not to laugh.

"I then spoke to her of painting, as I would have spoken to a fellow artist, using the technical terms

common in the profession. She listened attentively, eagerly seeking to divine the meaning of the terms, so as to understand my thoughts. From time to time she would exclaim: 'Oh! I understand, I understand. It is very interesting.'

"We returned home.

"The next day, on seeing me, she approached me, cordially holding out her hand; and we at once became firm friends.

"She was a good creature who had a kind of soul on springs, which became enthusiastic at a bound. She lacked equilibrium, like all women who are spinsters at the age of fifty. She seemed to be preserved in a pickle of innocence; but her heart still retained something very youthful and inflammable. She loved both nature and animals with a fervor, a love like old wine fermented through age, with a sensuous love that she never had bestowed on men.

"One thing is certain, that the sight of a bitch nursing her puppies, a mare roaming in a meadow with a foal at its side, a bird's nest full of young ones, squeaking, with their open mouths and enormous heads, affected her perceptibly.

"Poor, solitary, sad, pitiable beings! I have loved you ever since I became acquainted with that poor Miss Harriet!

"I soon discovered that she had something she would like to tell me, but dared not, and I was amused at her timidity. When I set out in the morning with my knapsack, she accompanied me in

silence as far as the end of the village, evidently struggling to find words with which to begin conversation. Then she would leave me abruptly, and walk away quickly with her springy step.

"One day, however, she plucked up courage:

" 'I should like to see how you paint pictures. Are you willing? I have been very curious.'

"And she blushed as if she had said something very audacious.

"I conducted her to the bottom of the Petit-Val, where I had begun a large picture.

"She remained standing behind me, following all my motions with concentrated attention. Then, suddenly, fearing, perhaps, that she was disturbing me, she said 'Thank you,' and walked away.

"But she soon became more friendly, and accompanied me every day, her countenance exhibiting visible pleasure. She carried her camp-stool under her arm, not permitting me to carry it. She would remain there for hours, silent and motionless, following with her eye the point of my brush in its every movement. When I obtained unexpectedly just the effect I wanted by a dash of color put on with the palette knife, she involuntarily uttered a little 'Ah!' of astonishment, of joy, of admiration. She had an almost religious respect for that human reproduction of a part of nature's work divine. My studies appeared to her a kind of religious pictures, and sometimes she spoke to me of God, with the idea of converting me.

"Oh, he was a queer, good-natured being, this God of hers! He was a sort of village philosopher without any great resources, and without great power; for she always figured him to herself as inconsolable over injustices committed under his eyes, if he were helpless to prevent them.

"She was, however, on excellent terms with him, affecting even to be the confidante of his secrets and of his troubles. She would say:

" 'God wills,' or 'God does not will,' just like a sergeant announcing: 'The colonel has commanded.'

"At the bottom of her heart she deplored my ignorance of the intentions of the Eternal, which she endeavored to impart to me.

"Almost every day I found in my pockets, in my hat when I lifted it from the ground, in my paint-box, in my polished shoes standing in front of my door in the morning, those little pious tracts which she, no doubt, received directly from Paradise.

"I treated her as one would treat an old friend, with unaffected cordiality. But I soon perceived that she had changed somewhat in her manner; though, for a while, I paid little attention to it.

"When I was painting, whether in my valley or in some country lane, I would see her suddenly appear with her rapid, springy walk. She would then sit down abruptly, out of breath, as if she had been running, or were overcome by some profound emotion. Her face would be red, that English red which is denied to the people of all other countries;

then, without any reason, she would turn ashy pale and seem about to faint away. Gradually however, her natural color returned and she would begin to speak.

"Then, without warning, she would break off in the middle of a sentence, spring up from her seat, and walk away so rapidly and so strangely that I was at my wits' end to discover whether I had done or said anything to displease or wound her.

"I finally came to the conclusion that those were her normal manners, somewhat modified, no doubt, in my honor during the first days of our acquaintance.

"When she returned to the farm, after walking for hours on the windy coast, her long curls often hung straight down, as if their springs had been broken. Hitherto this had seldom given her any concern, and she would come to dinner without embarrassment, all disheveled by her sister, the breeze. But now she would go to her room and arrange the untidy locks, and when I would say, with familiar gallantry, which, however, always offended her:

" 'You are as beautiful as a star to-day, Miss Harriet,' a blush immediately rose to her cheeks, the blush of a young girl.

"Then she would suddenly become quite reserved, and cease coming to see me paint. I thought, 'This is only a fit of temper; it will blow over.' But it did not always blow over, and when I spoke to her she answered me either with affected indifference or with sullen annoyance.

"She became by turns rude, impatient, and nervous. I never saw her now except at meals, and we spoke but little. I concluded, at last, that I must have offended her in some way; and, accordingly, I said to her one evening:

" 'Miss Harriet, why is it that you do not act toward me as formerly? What have I done to displease you? You are causing me much pain.'

"She replied, in a comical tone of anger:

" 'I am just the same with you as formerly. It is not true, not true,' and she ran upstairs and shut herself in her room.

"Occasionally she would look at me in a peculiar manner. I have often said to myself since then that those who are condemned to death must look thus when they are informed that their last day has come. In her eye lurked a species of insanity, at once mystical and violent; and even more, a fever, an aggravated longing, impatient and impotent, for the unattained and unattainable.

"Nay, it seemed to me that there was also going on within her a struggle in which her heart wrestled with an unknown force that she sought to master, and even, perhaps, something else. But what do I know?

"This was indeed a singular revelation.

"For some time I had begun to work, as soon as daylight appeared, on a picture the subject of which was this:

"A deep ravine, inclosed, surmounted by two

thickets of trees and vines, extended into the distance and was lost, submerged in that milky vapor, in that cloudlike thistledown that sometimes floats over valleys at daybreak. And at the extreme end of that heavy transparent fog one saw, or, rather, surmised, that two human beings were approaching, a youth and a maiden, their arms interlaced, embracing each other, their heads inclined toward each other, and their lips meeting. A first ray of the sun, glistening through the branches, pierced that fog of the dawn, illuminated it with a rosy reflection, just behind the rustic lovers, framing their vague shadows in a silvery background. It was well done; yes, indeed, well done.

"I was working on the declivity that led to the Valley of Etretat. On this particular morning I had, by chance, the sort of floating vapor which I needed. Suddenly something rose in front of me like a phantom; it was Miss Harriet. On seeing me she was about to flee. But I called after her, saying: 'Come here, come here, Mademoiselle. I have a nice little picture for you.'

"She came forward, though with seeming reluctance, and I handed her my sketch. She said nothing, but stood for a long time motionless, looking at it; and suddenly she burst into tears. She wept spasmodically, like men who have striven hard to restrain their tears, but who, unable to do so longer, abandon themselves to grief, though still resisting. I sprang to my feet, moved at the sight

of a sorrow I did not comprehend, and I took her by the hand with an impulse of brusque affection, a true French impulse which acts before it reflects.

"She let her hands rest in mine for a few seconds, and I felt them quiver as if all her nerves were being wrenched. Then she withdrew her hands abruptly, or, rather, snatched them away.

"I recognized that tremor, for I had felt it, and I could not be deceived. Ah! the love tremor of a woman, whether she be fifteen or fifty years of age, whether she be of the people or of society, goes so straight to my heart that I never have any hesitation in understanding it.

"Her whole frail being had trembled, vibrated, been overcome. I knew it. She walked away before I had time to say a word, leaving me as surprised as if I had witnessed a miracle and as troubled as if I had committed a crime.

"I did not go in to breakfast. I went to take a turn on the edge of the cliff, feeling that I would just as lief weep as laugh, looking on the adventure as both comic and deplorable, and my position as ridiculous, believing her unhappy enough to become insane.

"I asked myself what I ought to do. It seemed best for me to leave the place, and I immediately resolved to do so.

"Somewhat sad and perplexed, I wandered about until dinner time, and entered the farmhouse just when the soup had been served.

"I took my seat at the table as usual. Miss Harriet was there, eating away solemnly, without speaking to any one, without even lifting her eyes. Her manner and expression were, however, the same as usual.

"I waited patiently till the meal had been finished, when, turning toward the landlady, I said: 'Madame Lecacheur, it will not be long now before I shall have to take my leave of you.'

"The good woman, at once surprised and troubled, replied in her drawling voice: 'My dear sir, what is it you say? You are going to leave us after I have become so accustomed to you?'

"I glanced at Miss Harriet out of the corner of my eye. Her countenance did not change in the least. But Céleste, the little servant, looked up at me. She was a fat girl, about eighteen years of age, rosy, fresh, as strong as a horse, and possessing the rare attribute of cleanliness. I had kissed her at odd times in out-of-the-way corners, after the manner of travelers—nothing more.

"The dinner being at length over, I went to smoke my pipe under the apple-trees, walking up and down from one end of the inclosure to the other. All the reflections I had made during the day, the strange discovery of the morning, that passionate and grotesque attachment for me, the recollections which that revelation had suddenly called up, at once charming and perplexing, perhaps, also, that look which the servant had cast on

me at the announcement of my departure—all these things, combined, put me now in a reckless humor, gave me a tickling sensation of kisses on the lips, and in my veins a something that urged me on to commit some folly.

"Night was coming on, casting its dark shadows under the trees, when I descried Céleste, who had gone to fasten up the poultry-yard at the other end of the inclosure. I darted toward her, running so noiselessly that she heard nothing, and as she got up from closing the small trapdoor by which the chickens got in and out, I clasped her in my arms and rained on her coarse, fat face a shower of kisses. She struggled, laughing all the time, as she was accustomed to do in such circumstances. Why did I suddenly loosen my grip of her? Why did I at once experience a shock? What was it that I heard behind me?

"It was Miss Harriet, who had come upon us, who had seen us, and who stood in front of us motionless as a spectre. Then she disappeared in the darkness.

"I was ashamed, embarrassed, more desperate than if she had caught me in some criminal act.

"I slept badly that night; I was completely unnerved and haunted by sad thoughts. I seemed to hear loud weeping, but in this I was no doubt deceived. Moreover, I thought several times that I heard some one walking up and down in the house and opening the hall door.

"Toward morning, overcome by fatigue, I fell asleep. I got up late and did not go downstairs until the late breakfast, being still in a bewildered state, not knowing what kind of expression to put on.

"No one had seen Miss Harriet. We waited for her at table, but she did not appear. At last Mother Lecacheur went to her room. The English woman had gone out. She must have set out at break of day, as she was wont to do, in order to see the sun rise.

"Nobody seemed surprised at this, and we began to eat in silence.

"The weather was very hot, one of those broiling, heavy days when not a leaf stirs. The table had been placed out of doors, under an apple-tree; and from time to time Sapeur had gone to the cellar to draw a jug of cider, everybody was so thirsty. Céleste brought the dishes from the kitchen, a ragoût of mutton with potatoes, a cold rabbit, and a salad. Afterward she placed before us a dish of strawberries, the first of the season.

"As I wished to wash and freshen these, I asked the servant to draw me a pitcher of cold water.

"In about five minutes she returned, declaring that the well was dry. She had lowered the pitcher to the full extent of the cord, and had touched the bottom, but when she drew up the pitcher it was empty. Mother Lecacheur, anxious to examine the

thing for herself, went out and did so. She returned, announcing that one could see clearly something in the well, something altogether unusual. But this, no doubt, was bundles of straw, which a neighbor had thrown in out of spite.

"I also wished to look down the well, hoping I might be able to clear up the mystery, and I perched myself close to the brink. I perceived indistinctly a white object. What could it be? I then conceived the idea of lowering a lantern at the end of a cord. When I did so the yellow flame danced on the layers of stone and gradually became clearer. All four of us were leaning over the opening, Sapeur and Céleste having now joined us. The lantern rested on a black-and-white indistinct mass, singular, incomprehensible. Sapeur exclaimed:

"It is a horse. I see the hoofs. It must have got out of the pasture in the night and fallen in."

"But suddenly a cold shiver froze me to the marrow. I first recognized a foot, then a leg sticking up; the whole body and the other leg were completely under water.

"I stammered out in a loud voice, trembling so violently that the lantern danced hither and thither over the slipper.

" 'It is a woman! who—who can it be? It is Miss Harriet.'

"Sapeur alone did not manifest horror. He had witnessed many such scenes in Africa.

"Mother Lecacheur and Céleste uttered piercing screams and ran away.

"But it was necessary to recover the corpse of the dead woman. I attached the young man securely by the waist to the end of the pulley rope and lowered him very slowly. In one hand he held the lantern, and in the other a rope. Soon I recognized his voice, which seemed to come from the center of the earth, crying: 'Stop!'

"I then saw him fish something out of the water. It was the other leg. He then bound the two feet together and shouted anew:

" 'Haul up!'

"I began to wind up, but I felt my arms crack, my muscles twitch, and I was in terror lest I should let the man fall to the bottom. When his head appeared at the brink I asked:

" 'Well?' as if I expected he had a message from the drowned woman.

"We both got on the stone slab at the edge of the well and from opposite sides we began to haul up the body.

"Mother Lecacheur and Céleste watched us from a distance, concealed behind the wall of the house. When they saw issuing from the hole the black slippers and white stockings of the drowned person they disappeared.

"Sapeur seized the ankles, and we drew up the body of the poor woman. The head was shocking to look at, being bruised and lacerated, and the long

gray hair, out of curl forever, hanging down, tangled and disordered.

" 'In the name of all that is holy, how lean she is!' exclaimed Sapeur, in a contemptuous tone.

"We carried her into the room, and as the women did not put in an appearance I, with the assistance of the stable lad, dressed the corpse for burial.

"I washed her disfigured face. Under the touch of my finger an eye was slightly opened and regarded me with that pale, cold look, that terrible look of a corpse which seems to come from the beyond. I braided as well as I could her disheveled hair, and with my clumsy hands arranged on her head a novel and singular coiffure. Then I took off her dripping, wet garments, baring, not without a feeling of shame, as if I had been guilty of some profanation, her shoulders and her chest and her long arms, as slim as the twigs of a tree.

"I next went to fetch some flowers, poppies, bluets, marguerites, and fresh, sweet-smelling grass with which to strew her funeral couch.

"I then had to go through the usual formalities, as I was alone to attend to everything. A letter found in her pocket, written at the last moment, requested that her body be buried in the village in which she had passed the last days of her life. A sad suspicion weighed on my heart. Was it not on my account that she wished to be laid to rest in this place?

"Toward evening all the female gossips of the locality came to view the remains; but I would not allow a single person to enter; I desired to be alone, and I watched beside her all night.

"I looked at the corpse by the flickering light of the candles, at this unhappy woman, unknown to us all, who had died in such a lamentable manner and so far away from home. Had she left no friends, no relatives behind her? What had her infancy been? What had been her life? Whence had she come thither all alone, a wanderer, lost like a dog driven from home? What secrets of sufferings and of despair were sealed up in that poor body whose outward appearance had driven from her all affection, all love?

"How many unhappy beings there are! I felt that the eternal injustice of implacable nature weighed upon that human creature. It was all over with her, without her ever having experienced, perhaps, that which sustains the greatest outcasts —to wit, the hope of being loved once! Otherwise, why should she thus have concealed herself, fled from the face of others? Why did she love everything so tenderly and so passionately, everything living that was not a man?

"I recognized, also, that she believed in a God, and that she hoped to receive compensation from Him for all the miseries she had endured. She would now disintegrate and become, in turn, a plant. She would blossom in the sun, the cattle

would browse on her leaves, the birds would bear away the seeds, and through these changes she would become again human flesh. But that which is called the soul had been extinguished at the bottom of the dark well. She suffered no longer. She had given her life for that of others yet to come.

"Hours passed away in this silent and sinister communion with the dead. A pale light at last announced the dawn of a new day; then a red ray streamed in on the bed, making a bar of light across the coverlet and across her hands. This was the hour she had so much loved. The awakened birds began to sing in the trees.

"I opened the window wide and threw back the curtains, that the whole heavens might look in upon us, and, bending over the icy corpse, I took in my hands the mutilated head and slowly, without terror or disgust, I imprinted a kiss, a long kiss, upon those lips which never before had been kissed."

Léon Chenal remained silent. The women wept. We heard on the box seat the Comte d'Etraille blowing his nose from time to time. The coachman alone had gone to sleep. The horses, which felt no longer the sting of the whip, had slackened their pace and dragged along slowly. The drag, hardly advancing at all, seemed suddenly torpid, as if it had been freighted with sorrow.

MAD!

I

DURING days and days, nights and nights, I had dreamed of the first kiss that was to consecrate our engagement, but I knew not on what spot I should lay my lips. Not on her forehead —that was accustomed to family caresses—nor on her fair hair, which menial hands had dressed, nor on her eyes, whose curved lashes looked like little wings, because that would have made me think of the farewell kiss which closes the eyelids of some dead woman whom one has adored, nor on her lovely mouth, which I will not, which I must not, possess until that divine moment when Elaine will at last belong to me altogether and forever; but on that delicious little dimple which comes in one of her cheeks when she is happy, when she smiles, and which excited me as much as did her voice with its languorous softness, on that evening when our love-affair began, at the Souverettes' house.

Our parents had gone out of doors and were walking slowly under the chestnut-trees in the gar-

den, leaving us entirely alone for a short time. I went up to her, clasped both her hands in mine, which were trembling, and gently drawing her close to me, I whispered: "How happy I am, Elaine, and how I love you!" and I kissed her almost timidly, on the dimple.

She trembled, as if from the sting of a burn, blushed deeply, and with an affectionate look she said: "I love you too, Jacques, and I am very happy!"

That embarrassment, that sudden emotion which revealed the perfect spotlessness of a pure mind, the instinctive shrinking of virginity, that childlike innocence, that blush of modesty, delighted me above everything as a presage of happiness. It seemed to me as if I were unworthy of her; I was almost ashamed of bringing to her and putting into her small, saintlike hands the remains of a damaged heart, which had been polluted by debauchery; that miserable thing which had served as a plaything for unworthy mistresses, which was saturated with lies, and felt as if it would die of bitterness and disgust.

II

How soon she has become accustomed to me, how suddenly she has turned into a woman and become metamorphosed! She is no longer at all like the artless girl, the sensitive child, to whom I

did not know what to say, and whose sudden questions disconcerted me.

She is coquettish, and there is seduction in her attitudes, in her gestures, in her laugh, and in her touch. One might fancy that she is trying her power over me, and that she suspects I no longer have any will of my own. She does with me whatever she likes, and I am quite incapable of resisting the charm that emanates from her; I feel transported by the touch of her caressing hands, and so happy that I am at times frightened at my own felicity.

My life now passes amid the most delicious of punishments: afternoons and evenings which we spend together, unconstrained moments when, as we sit on the sofa together, she lays her head on my shoulder, holds my hands, and half closes her beautiful eyes while we decide what our future life shall be; when I cover her face with kisses and inhale the odor of that soft, fluffy hair, which is as fine as silk, like a nimbus round her imperial brow. All this excites me, unsettles me, kills me, and yet I feel ready to weep when the time comes for us to part, and I really exist only when I am with Elaine.

I can hardly sleep; I fancy I see her rise in the darkness, delicate, fair, and rosy, so supple, so elegant with her small waist and tiny hands and feet, her graceful head, and that look of mockery and coaxing which lies in her smile, that dawn-like

brightness which illuminates her glance; and when I think that she is to be my wife, I long to sing, to shout my amorous folly in the silence of the night.

Elaine, too, seems to be at the end of her strength; she has grown languid and nervous; she would like to bridge over the fortnight that we still have to wait; and so little does she hide her longing that one of her uncles, Colonel d'Orthez, said after dinner the other evening: "My dear children, one would think you were two soldiers looking forward to a leave of absence!"

III

I do not know what has influenced me, or whence come those fears that have suddenly assailed me, and taken possession of my whole being, like a flight of poisoned arrows. The nearer the day approaches that I am so ardently longing for, on which Elaine will take my name and belong to me, the more anxious, nervous, and tormented I feel by the uncertainty of the morrow.

I love and I am passionately loved, and few married pairs set out on the unknown journey of a totally new life and enter matrimony with such hopes, and the same assurance of happiness, as we two.

I have so much faith in the girl I am to marry, and have made her such vows of love, that I should certainly kill myself without a moment's hesitation if anything were to happen to separate us, to force us to a necessary and irremediable rupture, or if Elaine were seized by some illness which should carry her off quickly. And yet I hesitate, I am afraid, for I know that many others have wrecked everything, have lost their love on the way, disenchanted their wives, and have themselves been disenchanted in those first essays of possession.

What does Elaine expect in her vague innocence, which has perhaps been lessened by the half-confidences of married friends, by semi-avowals, by all the kisses of this sort of apprenticeship, which is a court of love? What does she possess? What does she hope for? Oh! to think that one is risking one's whole future happiness at a game so hazardous that the merest trifle might make a man completely ridiculous or hopeful, and make an idolized woman smile or weep!

I do not know a more desirable, a prettier, or a more attractive being in the whole world than Elaine; I am exhausted by feverish love, and I wish every particle of her being to belong to me; I love her ardently, but I would willingly give half I possess to have gone through this ordeal, to be a week older *and still happy!*

IV

My prospective mother-in-law spoke to me aside yesterday, while they were dancing, and with tears in her eyes she said in a tremulous voice:

"You are about to possess the most precious object we have here, and what we love best—I beg you to spare her the slightest unhappiness, and to be kind and gentle toward her. I count on your uprightness and affection to guide her and protect her in this dangerous life of Paris."

Then, yielding to her feelings more and more, she added: "I do not think that you suppose I have tried to instruct her in her new duties or to disturb her charming innocence, which is the result of my care; when two persons worship each other as you two do, a girl learns what she is ignorant of so quickly and so well!"

I almost burst out laughing in her face, for so theatrical a phrase appeared to me both ridiculous and doubtful. So that respectable woman had always been a passive, pliable, inert object, who never had had one moment of vibration, of tender emotion in her husband's arms; I understood the reason why, as I wasted time at the clubs, he escaped from her as soon as possible and formed other liaisons which cost him dear, but in which he found at least some semblance of love.

And that piece of advice, at the last moment, so

commonplace and so natural, which I ought to have expected, has made me nervous and in spite of myself has plunged me into a state of perplexity from which I can not extricate myself. I remember those absurd stories we hear among friends, after a good dinner. What will be that supreme trial of our love, for her and for me, and will that love which now was my whole life come out of the ordeal lessened or increased tenfold? I looked at the couch on which Elaine, my adored Elaine, was sitting, with her head half-hidden behind the feathers of her fan, and she whispered in a rather vexed voice:

"How cross you look, my dear Jacques! Is it because you are to be married? And you have such a mocking look on your face! If the thought of it terrifies you too much, there is still time to say *no!*

Delighted, bewitched by her caressing glances, I said in a low voice, in her tiny ear:

"I adore you; and these last moments that still separate us seem centuries to me, my dear Elaine!"

V

Tiresome ceremonies occupied yesterday and to-day, which I went through almost mechanically.

First, there was the *yes* before the Mayor at the

civil ceremony, like some everyday response in church, which one is in a hurry to get over, and which has almost the suggestion of an imperious law, to which one is bound to submit, and of a state of bondage, which will, perhaps, be very irksome, since the whole of existence is made up of chance.

Then the service in church, with the decorated altar, the voices of the choir, the solemn music of the organ, the unctuous address of the old priest, who emphasized his periods, and who seemed quite proud of having prepared Elaine for confirmation; then the procession of the vestry, the hand-shaking, and the greetings of people whom one hardly sees, and whom one may or may not recognize.

Under the long tulle veil, which almost covered her, with the symbolical orange-blossoms on her bright, fair hair, in her white robes, with her downcast eyes and her graceful figure, Elaine looked to me like a Psyche, whose innocent heart was dedicated to love. I felt how vain and artificial all this form was, how little this show counted before the kiss, the triumphant, revealing, maddening kiss, which sealed our nuptial vow.

VI

Elaine loves me as much as I adore her.

She left her parental dwelling as if she were go-

ing to some festivity, without once turning back to look upon all that she had left behind, in the way of affection and recollection, and without even a farewell tear.

She looked like a bird escaped from its cage and which does not know where to settle, which beats its wings in the intoxication of the light and warbles incessantly. She repeated the same words, as if she were dazed, and her laugh sounded like the cooing of a pigeon; and looking into my eyes, with her eyes full of languor and her arms round my neck like a bracelet, and with her burning cheek against mine, she suddenly exclaimed:

"My darling, would you not give ten years of your life to have already reached the end of the journey?"

This question so disconcerted me that I did not know what to reply; my brain reeled, as if I had been at the edge of a precipice. Did she already know what her mother had not told her? Had she already learned that of which she should have been ignorant? Had that heart, which I used to compare to the Vessel of Election, of which the litanies of Our Lady speak, already been damaged?

Oh, white veil, which hid the blushes, the half-closed eyes, and the trembling lips of a Psyche; oh, little hands which you raised in an attitude of prayer toward the lighted and decorated altar; oh, innocent and charming questions, which delighted me to the depths of my being, and which

seemed to me to be an absolute promise of happiness, were you nothing but a lie, and a wonderfully well-acted piece of trickery?

But was I not wrong, and an idiot, to allow such thoughts to take possession of me and to poison my deep, absorbing love, which was now my only law and my only object, by odious and foolish suggestions? What an abject and miserable nature I must have, for so simple, affectionate, and natural a question to disturb me so, when I ought immediately to have replied to Elaine's question, with all my heart that belonged to her:

"Yes, ten or twenty years, because you are now my happiness, my desire, my love!"

VII

Elaine was still sleeping when I arose, and I did not wish to wait until she awoke. Her complexion was almost transparent, her lips were half-open, as if she were dreaming, and she seemed so overcome with sleep that I felt much emotion when I looked at her.

I drank four glasses of champagne, one after another, as quickly as I could, but it did not quench my thirst. I was feverish, and would have given anything in the world for something to interest me suddenly, to absorb me and lift me out of that

slough in which my heart and my brain were being engulfed, as if in a quicksand. I did not venture to own to myself what was making me mad with grief, or to scrutinize the muddy bottom of my present thoughts sincerely and courageously, to question myself and to pull myself together.

It would have been so odious, so infamous, to harbor such suspicions unjustly, to accuse that adorable creature who was not yet twenty, whom I loved and *who seemed to love me,* without having certain proofs, that I felt that I was blushing at the idea that I had any doubt of her innocence. Ah! Why did I marry?

I had a sufficient income to enable me to live as I liked, to play the gallant to beautiful women who pleased me, whom I chanced to meet and who amused me, and who sometimes gave me unexpected proofs of affection; but I never had allowed myself to be caught altogether, and in order to keep my heart warm I had some romantic and sentimental friendships with women in society, some of those delightful flirtations which have an appearance of love, which fill up the idleness of a useless life with a number of unexpected sensations, with small duties and vague, subtle pleasures!

And was I now destined to be like one of those ships which an unskilful turn of the helm runs ashore as it is leaving the harbor? What terrible trials were awaiting me, what sorrows and what struggles?

A humorous friend said to me one night in jest at the club, when I had just broken one of those banks which form an epoch in a player's life:

"If I were in your place, Jacques, I should distrust such runs of luck as that, for one always has to pay for them sooner or later!"

Sooner or later!

I half opened the bedroom door gently. Elaine was in one of those heavy sleeps similar to those that follow intoxication. Who could tell whether, when she opened her eyes and called me, surprised at not finding me, her whole being would not become languid, and suddenly sink into a state of prostration? I wished to reason with myself, and bring myself face to face with those cursed suggestions, as one does with a skittish horse before some object that frightens it, and to evoke the recollection of every hour, every minute, of that first night, and to extract her secret from her.

Elaine's looks and radiant smile were overflowing with happiness, and she had the air of a conqueror who is proud of his triumph, for she was now a *woman,* and we had at least been alone in this modernized country house, which had been redecorated and brightened up to serve as the frame for our affection! She hardly seemed to know what she was saying or doing, and ran from room to room in her light negligée of mauve crape, without exactly knowing where to sit, and was almost dazzled by the light of the lamps that had large shades made like rose-leaves over them.

There was no embarrassment, no hesitation, no shy looks, no recoiling from the arms that were stretched out to her; none of those delightful little acts of awkwardness that show a virgin soul free from all perversion, in her manner of sitting on my knees, of putting her bare arms round my neck. She laughed nervously, and her supple form trembled when I kissed her, and she said things to me that were only suitable to be whispered, while a strange languor overshadowed her eyes and dilated her nostrils.

Suddenly, with a mocking gesture which seemed to bid defiance to the repast that was laid on a small table—cold meat of various kinds, plates of fruit and cakes, the ice-pail, from which the neck of a bottle of champagne protruded—she said merrily:

"I am not at all hungry, dear; let us not eat until later; what do you say?"

She half turned round to the large bed, which looked white in the shadow of the recess in which it stood, with its two untouched pillows, almost solemn in their whiteness. She was not smiling any more; there was a bluish gleam in her eyes, like that of burning alcohol, and I lost my head. Elaine did not try to escape, and did not utter a complaint.

Oh, that night of torture and delight, that night which should never have ended!

I determined that I would be as patient as a

detective who is trying to discover the traces of a crime; that I would investigate the past of this girl, about which I knew nothing, as I should be sure to discover some proof, some important reminiscence, some servant who had been her accomplice.

And yet I adored her, my pretty, my divine Elaine, and I would consent to no matter what if only she were what I dreamed her, what I wished her to be, if only this nightmare would go and no longer rise between her and me.

When she awoke she spoke to me in her coaxing voice. Oh, her kisses, again her kisses, always her kisses, in spite of everything!

Oh, to have believed blindly, to have believed on my knees that she was not lying, that she was not making a mockery of my tenderness, and that she never had belonged, and never would belong, to anyone but me!

VIII

I WISHED that I could transform myself into one of those crafty, oily-tongued priests to whom women confess their most secret faults, to whom they intrust their souls and frequently ask for advice, and that Elaine would come and kneel at the grating of the confessional, where I should press

her closely with questions, and gradually extract sincere confidences from her.

Nowadays, as soon as I am by the side of a young or old married woman I try to give our conversation a knowing turn; I forget all reserve, and I try to make her talk on the only subject that interests and holds me, to extract from her, if possible, a recital of her true heart secrets. Was she shy or bold in the presence of her husband in those first days of their married life? Some do not appear to understand me, blush, leave me as if I were some unpleasant, ill-mannered person and had offended them; as if I had tried to force open the precious casket in which they keep their sweetest recollections.

Others understand me only too well, scent something equivocal and ridiculous, though they do not exactly know what, make me go on, and finally get out of the difficulty by some subtle piece of impertinence and a burst of mocking laughter.

Two or three at most—and they were those pretty little upstarts who talk recklessly and boast about their vice, and whom one could soon not leave a leg to stand upon were one to take the trouble—have related their impressions to me with ironical complaisance, and I found nothing in what they told me that reassured me, nor could I discover anything serious, true, or moving in it.

That supreme initiation amused them as much as if it had been a scene from a comedy; the small

amount of affection that they felt for the man with whom their existence had been welded grew less and evaporated altogether—and they remembered nothing about it except its ridiculous and hateful side, and described it as a sort of pantomime in which they played a bad part. But these did not love, and were not adored as Elaine was. They married either from interest, or that they might not remain old maids; that they might have more liberty and escape from troublesome guardianship.

Silly dolls, without either heart or head, they had neither that almost diseased nervosity, nor that need of affection, nor that instinct of love which I discovered in my wife's nature, and which attracted me at the same time that it terrified me.

Besides, who could convince me of my errors? Who could dissipate that darkness in which I was lost? What miracle could restore *all* my belief in her again?

IX

Elaine knew that I was hiding something from her, that I was unhappy; that, as it were, some threatening obstacle had risen between her and me, that some unbearable suspicion was oppressing me, torturing me, and keeping me from her arms, poisoning and disturbing that affection in

which I had hoped to find fresh youth, absolute happiness, my dream of dreams.

She never spoke to me about it, but seemed to shrink from a definite explanation which might wreck her love. She surrounded me with endearing attentions, and appeared to be trying to make my life so pleasant to me that nothing in the world could draw me from it. And she would certainly cure me, if this madness of mine were not, alas! like those wounds that are continually reopening, and that no balm can heal.

At times I lived again; I imagined that her caresses had exorcised me, that I was saved, that doubt was no longer gnawing at my heart, that I should adore her again as before. I would throw myself at her knees and put my lips on her little hands, which she abandoned to me; I looked at her lovely, limpid eyes as if they had been bits of a blue sky that appeared amid black storm-clouds, and I whispered, with something like a sob in my throat:

"You love me, do you not, with all your heart, you love me as much as I love you; tell me so again, my dear love; tell me that, and nothing but that!"

And she used to reply eagerly, with a smile of joy on her lips:

"Do you not know it? Do you not see every moment that I love you, that you have taken entire possession of me, and that I live only for you and by you?"

And her kisses gave me new life, and intoxicated me, as when one returns from a long journey, having been in peril, and despairing of ever seeing some beloved object again, and meets with a sort of frenzied embrace, forgetting everything in that divine feeling that one is about to die of happiness.

X

These, however, were only ephemeral clear spots in our domestic sky, and the crises that accompanied them only grew more bitter and terrible. I knew that Elaine was growing more and more uneasy at the apparent strangeness of my character, that she suffered from it, and that it affected her nerves; that the existence to which I was condemning her in spite of myself, that all this immoderate love of mine, followed by fits of inexplicable coldness and melancholy, disconcerted her, so that she was no longer the same, and kept away from me. She could not hide her grief, and was continually worrying me with questions of affectionate pity. She repeated the same things over and over again, with hateful persistence. Had she vexed me, without knowing it? Was I already tired of married life, and did I regret my lost liberty? Had I any private troubles of which I had not told her; heavy debts which I did not know how to pay? Was it

family matters or some former connection with a woman that I had broken off suddenly, which now threatened to create a scandal? Was I being worried by anonymous letters? What was it, in a word? What was it?

My denials only exasperated her, so that she sulked in silence, while her brain worked and her heart grew hard toward me; but could I tell her of the suspicions that were filling my life with gloom and annihilating me? Would it not be odious and vile to accuse her of a fall, without any proofs or any clue, and would she ever forget such an insult?

I almost envied those unfortunate wretches who had a right to be jealous, who had to fight against a woman's coquettish and light behavior, and who had to defend their honor when it was threatened by some poacher on the preserves of love. They had a target to aim at; they knew their enemies and knew what they were doing; while I was wandering in a land of terrible mirages, was struggling in the midst of vague suppositions, was causing my own troubles, and was enraged with her past, which was, I had felt sure, as white and pure as any bridal veil.

Ah, it would be better to blow my brains out, I thought to myself, than to prolong such a situation! I had had enough of it. I hardly lived, and I wished to know all that Elaine had done before we became engaged. I wished to know whether I

was the first or the second, and I determined to know it, too, even if I had to sacrifice years of my life in inquiry, and to lower myself to compromising words and acts, to every species of artifice, and to spend everything that I possessed!

She might believe whatever she liked, for after all I should only laugh at it. We might have been so happy, and there were so many who envied me, and who would gladly have consented to take my place!

XI

I no longer knew where I was going, but was like a train dashing at full speed through a dense fog, disturbing in vain the perfect silence of the sleeping country with its puffing and shrill whistles, when the engineer cannot distinguish the changing lights of the disks nor the signals, and when soon some terrible crash will send the train off the rails, and the carriages will become a heap of ruins.

I was afraid of going mad, and at times I asked myself whether any of my family had shown any signs of mental aberration and had been locked up in a hospital for the insane, and whether the life of continual pleasure, of turning night into day, and of frequent violent emotions, that I had led for years, had not at last affected my brain. If I had

believed in anything, and in the science of the occult, which haunts so many restless brains, I should have imagined that some enemy was bewitching me and laying invisible snares for me, that he was suggesting those actions which were quite unworthy of the frank, upright, and well-bred man that I was, and was trying to destroy the happiness of which Elaine and I had dreamed.

During a whole week I devoted myself to that hateful business of playing the spy, and to those inquiries that were torturing me. I had succeeded in discovering the lady's-maid who had been in Elaine's service before we were married, and whom she loved as if she had been her foster sister, who used to accompany her whenever she went out, when she went to visit the poor and when she went for a walk; who used to wake her every morning, arrange her hair, and dress her. She was young and rather pretty, and one saw that Paris had improved her and given her a polish, and that she knew her difficult business thoroughly.

I had discovered, however, that her virtue was only apparent, especially since she had changed employers; that she was fond of going to the public balls, and that she divided her favors between a man who came from her part of the country (and who was a sergeant in a dragoon regiment) and a footman, and that she spent all her money on the races and on dress. I felt sure that I should be able to make her talk and get the truth out of her,

either by money or cunning, and so I asked her to meet me early one morning in a quiet square.

She listened to me at first in astonishment, without replying yes or no, as if she did not understand what I was aiming at, or with what object I was asking her all these questions about her former mistress; but when I offered her a few hundred francs to loosen her tongue, as I was impatient to get the matter over and pretended to know that she had managed interviews for Elaine with her lovers, that they were known and followed, that she was in the habit of frequenting quiet bachelors' quarters, from which she returned late, the sly little wench frowned, shrugged her shoulders, and exclaimed:

"What brutes some men are to have such ideas, and to cause such a good young lady as Mademoiselle Elaine any unhapiness! I tell you, you disgust me with your banknotes and your dirty hints, and I don't choose to say what you ought to wear on your head!"

She turned her back on me and hurried off, but her insolence, that indignant reply which she had given me, rejoiced me to the depths of my heart, like soothing balm that lulls pain.

I should have liked to call her back and tell her that it was all a joke, that I was devotedly in love with my wife, that I was always listening to hear her praised; but she was already out of sight, and I felt that I was ridiculous and mean, that I had lowered myself by what I had done, and

I swore that I would profit by such a humiliating lesson, and for the future show myself to Elaine as the trusting and ardent husband she deserved, and I thought myself cured, altogether cured.

Yet I was again a prey to the same bad thoughts, to the same doubts, and was sure that that girl had lied to me as all women lie when they are on the defensive, that she had made fun of me, that perhaps *some one* had foreseen this scene and had told her what to say and made sure of her silence, just as her complicity had been gained. Thus I shall always stumble against some barrier, and struggle in this wretched darkness and mire from which I cannot extricate myself!

XII

No, nobody knew anything against her! Neither the Superior of the convent where she had been brought up until she was sixteen, nor the servants that had waited on her, nor the governesses who had finished her education, could remember that Elaine had been difficult to check or to teach, or that she had had any other ideas than those natural to her age. She had certainly shown no precocious coquetry and disquieting instincts at school that would begin the inevitable eclogue of Daphnis and Chloe over again.

But—oh, I felt it too much for it to be nothing but a chimera and a mirage!—it was no pure girl who threw her arms around my neck so lovingly, and who returned my first kisses so deliciously, who was attracted by my society, who gave no signs of surprise and uttered no complaint, who appeared to forget everything when in my embrace. No, no, a thousand times no—that could not have been a pure woman.

I ought to have cast off that intoxication which was bewitching me, and to have rushed out of the room where such a lie was being consummated; I ought to have profited by her moments of amiable weakness, while she was incapable of collecting her thoughts, when she would with tears have confessed an early fault, for which the unhappy girl had not, perhaps, been altogether responsible. Perhaps by my entreaties, or even perhaps by violence, in terror at my furious looks, when my features would have been distorted by rage and my hands clinched in spite of myself in a gesture of menace and of murder, I might have forced her to open her heart, to show me its defilement, and to tell me of this sad love episode.

How do I know whether her sorrow might not have moved me to pity, whether I should not have wept with her at the heavy cross that both of us had to bear, whether I should not have forgiven her and opened my arms wide, so that she might have thrown herself into them as into a peaceful refuge?

Who could tell me or come to my aid? Who could give me the proofs, the real, undeniable proofs, either that I was an infamous wretch to suspect Elaine, whom I ought to have worshiped with my eyes shut, or that she was guilty, that she had lied, and that I had the right to cast her out of my life and to treat her like a worthless woman?

XIII

Had I married when I was quite young, before I had wallowed in the mire of Paris, from which one never can afterward free oneself—for heart and body both retain indelible marks of it—had experiences not disgusted me with belief in any woman, had I not been weaned from supreme illusions and surfeited with everything to the marrow, should I have had these abominable ideas?

I waited almost until I was beginning to decline in life before I took the right path and sought refuge in port, before seeking purity and virtue, and before listening to the continual advice of those who love me. I passed too suddenly from lies, from ephemeral enjoyments, from that satiety which depraves us, from vice in which one tries to acquire renewed strength and vigor and to discover some new and unknown sensation, to the pure sentimentalities of a betrothal to the unspeak-

able delights of a life that was common to two, to that first communion which should constitute married life.

If, instead of becoming involved in an engagement and forming a resolution so quickly—I had feared that someone else would be beforehand with me and rob me of Elaine's heart, or that I should relapse into my former habits; if instead of lacking moral strength and character enough in case I might have had to wait; if I had retreated without entering into any engagement and without having bound my life to that of the adorable girl whom chance had thrown in my way—it would surely have been far better. Had I waited, prepared myself, questioned myself, and accustomed myself to that metamorphosis; had I purified myself and forgotten the past, as in those retreats which precede the solemn ceremony when pious souls pronounce their indissoluble vows!

The reaction had been too sudden and violent for such a convalescent as I was. I had worked myself up, and pictured to myself something so white, so virginal, so paradisaical, such complete ignorance, such unconquerable modesty, and such delicious awkwardness, that Elaine's gayety, her unconstraint, her fearlessness, and her kisses had bewildered me, roused my suspicions, and filled me with anguish.

Yet I know how all—or nearly all—girls are educated in these days, and that the ignorant, simple

ones exist only in the drama, and I know also that they hear and learn too many things, both at home and in society, not to have an intuition of the results of love.

Elaine loves me with all her heart, for she has told me so time after time, and she repeats it to me more ardently than ever when I take her into my arms and appear happy. She must have seen that her beauty had, in a manner, converted me; that in order to possess her I had renounced many seductions and a long life of enjoyment; and perhaps she would no longer please me if she were too much of the little girl, and would appear ridiculous to me if she showed her fears by any entreaty, gesture, or sigh.

As the people in the South say, she would have acted the brave woman, and boasted, so that no complaint might betray her, and have imparted the wild tenderness of a jealous heart to her kisses, and would have attempted a struggle, which would certainly have been useless, against those recollections of mine, with which she thought I must be filled, in spite of myself.

I accused myself so that I might no longer accuse her. I studied my malady; I knew quite well I was mistaken, and I wished to be mistaken. I measured the stupidity and the disgrace of such suspicions; nevertheless, in spite of everything, they assailed me again, watched me traitorously, and I was carried away and devoured by them.

Ah! Was there in the whole world, even among the most wretched beggars that were dying of starvation, whom nature squeezes in a vise, as it were, or among the victims of love, anybody who could say that he was more unhappy than I?

XIV

This morning Comte de Saulnac, who was lunching here, told us a terrible story of a physician who had drugged or hypnotized a farmer's young daughter, who had been sent to him as a patient, and had brutally assaulted her.

Before he had finished I noticed an evil look on Elaine's face such as I had never seen before and with quivering nostrils she exclaimed in a hard voice: "To think that such a monster was not sent to the guillotine!"

Now, unless Elaine was a monster of wickedness, unless she had no heart and knew how to lie and to deceive as well as a girl whose only pleasure consists in making all those who are captivated by her beauty play the laughable part of dupes, unless that mask of youth concealed a most polluted soul, if there had been an unhappy episode in her life, would not something visible, something repellent, attacks of low spirits and of gloom and disgust with everything, have remained, which

would have shown the progress of some mysterious malady, the gradual weakening of the brain, and the enlargement of an incurable wound? She would have worried occasionally, would have been lost in thought and become confused when spoken to; she would have taken little interest in anything that happened, either at home or elsewhere. Kisses would have become a torture to her, and would have only excited a fever of revolt in her inanimate being.

I fancy that I can see such a victim of inexorable Destiny, as if she were a consumptive woman whose days are numbered, and who knows it. She smiles feebly when one tries to lift her out of her torpor, to amuse her, and to instil a little hope into her soul. She does not speak, but remains sitting silently at a window for days together, and one might think that her large, dreamy eyes are looking at strange sights in the depths of the sky, and see a long, attractive road there. But Elaine, on the contrary, thought of nothing but of amusing herself, of enjoying life and of laughing, and added all the tricks of a girl who has just left school to the seductive grace of a young woman. She carried men away with her; she was most attractive, and loving seemed to be what she was created for. She thought of nothing but little coquettish acts that made her more adorable, and of tender innuendoes that triumph over everything, and bring men to their knees and tempt them.

It was thus that I formerly dreamed of the woman who was to be my wife, and this was the manner in which I looked on life in common; and now this perpetual joy irritates me like a challenge, like some piece of insolent boasting, and those lips that seek mine and offer themselves so alluringly and coaxingly to me make me sad and torture me, as if they breathed nothing but a lie.

Ah! If she had been the mistress of another man before marriage, if she had belonged to some one else besides me, it could only have been from love, without altogether knowing what she wanted or what she was doing! And now, because she had acquired a name by marriage, because she had accidentally extricated herself from the entanglement of that false step and thought she had won the game, she fancied that I had not perceived anything, that I adored her and possessed her wholly.

How wretched I was! Should I never be able to escape from that night which was growing darker and darker, which was imprisoning me, driving me mad, and raising an increasing and impenetrable barrier between Elaine and me? Would not she, in the end, be the stronger—she whom I loved so dearly—would not she envelop me in so much love that at last I should again find the happiness that I had lost, as if it were a calm, sunlit haven, and thus forget this horrible nightmare when I fell on my knees before her beauty, with a contrite heart and pricked by remorse, happy to give myself to her

forever, altogether and more passionately than at the divine period of our betrothal?

XV

Even the sight of our bedroom became painful to me. I was afraid of it; I was uncomfortable there, and felt a kind of repulsion in entering it. It seemed to me as if Elaine were repeating a part that some one else had taught her, and I almost hoped that in a moment of forgetfulness she would allow her secret to escape her, and pronounce some name that was not mine; and I used to lie awake, with my ears on the alert, in the hope that she might betray herself in her sleep and murmur some revealing word, as she recalled the past, while my temples throbbed and my whole body trembled with excitement.

But when this was over and I saw her sleeping as peacefully as a little girl who was tired with playing, with parted lips and disheveled hair, and measured the full extent of the stupidity of my hatred and the sacrilegious madness of my jealousy, my heart softened and I fell into such a state of profound and absolute distress that I thought I should have died of it; large drops of cold perspiration ran down my cheeks and tears fell from my eyes, and I got up, so that my sobs might not disturb her rest and wake her.

As this could not continue, however, I told her one day that I felt so exhausted and ill that I should prefer to sleep in my own room. She appeared to believe me, and merely said:

"As you please, my dear!" but her blue eyes suddenly assumed a look so anxious and grieved that I turned my head aside so as not to see them.

XVI

I was again in the old house, *and without her,* in the old house where Elaine used to spend all her holidays, in the room whose shutters had not been opened since our departure seven months ago.

Why did I go there, where the calm of the country, the silence of the solitude, and my recollections irritated me and recalled my trouble, where I suffered even more than I did in Paris, and where I thought of Elaine every moment? I seemed to see her and to hear her, in a species of hallucination.

What did I learn from her letters, which I had taken out of the writing-table that she had used as a girl; what did I find out from her ball cards, which were stuck round her looking-glass, in which she used to admire herself formerly; what did her dresses, her dressing-gowns, and the dusty furniture, whose repose my trembling hands violated, tell me? Nothing, and always nothing!

At table I used to speak with the worthy couple who had never left the mansion and who appeared to look upon themselves as its second masters, with the apparent good nature of a man who was in love with his wife and who wished only to speak about her, who took an interest in the smallest detail of her childhood and youth, with all the jovial familiarity which encourages peasants to talk; and when a few glasses of white wine had loosened their tongues they would talk about her whom they loved as if she had been their child. At other times I used to question the farmers, when they came to settle their accounts.

Had Elaine the bridle on her neck as so many girls had? Did she like the country? Were the peasants fond of her, and did she show any preference for one or another? Were many people invited for the shooting, and did she visit much with the other ladies in the neighborhood?

They drank with their elbows resting on the table in front of me, uttered her praises in a voice as monotonous as a spinning-wheel, lost themselves in endless, senseless chatter which made me yawn in spite of myself, and told me her girlish tricks, which certainly did not disclose what was haunting me—the traces of a first love, that perilous flirtation, that foolish escapade which Elaine might have experienced.

Old and young, men and women, spoke of her with something like devotion, and all said how kind

and charitable she was, and as merry as a bird on a bright day; they said she pitied their poverty and their troubles, and was still the young girl in spite of her ng skirts, and fearing nothing, while even the anin ls loved her.

She was almost always alone, and never was troubled with any companions; she seemed to shun the house, to hide herself in the park when the bell announced some unexpected visit, and when one of her aunts, Madame de Pleissac, said to her:

"Do you think that you will ever find a husband with your shy manners?" she replied, with a burst of laughter:

"Very well, then, auntie, I shall do without one!"

She never had given a handle to spiteful chatter or to slander, and had not flirted with the best-looking young man in the neighborhood, any more than she had with the officers who stayed at the château during the maneuvers, or the neighbors who came to see her parents. And some of them even, old men whom years of work had bent like vine-stocks and had tanned like the leather bottles used by caravans in the East, would say, with tears in their dim eyes:

"Ah! When you married our young lady we all said that there would not be a happier man in the whole world than you!"

Ought I to have believed them? Were they not simple, frank souls, ignorant of wiles and of lies, who had no interest in deceiving me, who had lived

near Elaine while she was growing up and becoming a woman, and who had been familiar with her?

Could I be the only one who doubted Elaine, the only one who accused her and suspected her, I who loved her so madly, I whose only hope, only desire, only happiness she was? May Heaven guide me on this terrible road on which I have lost my way, where I am calling for help and where my misery is increasing every day, and grant me the infinite pleasure of being able to enjoy her caresses without any ill feeling, and to be able to love her as she loves me. And if I must expiate my old faults, and this infamous doubt which I am ashamed of not being immediately able to cast from me, if I must pay for my unmerited happiness with usury, I hope that I may be given to death as a prey, only provided that I may belong to her, idolize her, believe in her kisses, believe in her beauty and in her love, for one hour, for even a few moments!

XVII

I SUDDENLY remembered to-day a strange evening I had spent at Madame d'Ecoussens', when I was a bachelor, where all of us—some with secret and insurmountable agony and others with absolute indifference—went into one of the small rooms where a woman practitioner of palmistry, who was then

in vogue and whose name I have forgotten, had installed herself.

When it came to my turn to sit opposite her, as if I had been about to make my confession, she took my hands in her long, slender fingers, felt them, squeezed them, and titillated them, as if they had been a lump of wax which she was about to model into shape.

Severely dressed in black, with a pensive face, thin lips, and almost copper-colored eyes, and neither young nor old, this woman had something commanding, imperious, disturbing about her, and I must confess that my heart beat more violently than usual while she looked at the lines in my left hand through a strong magnifying-glass, where the mysterious characters of some Satanic conjuring appear to form a capital M.

She was very interesting, occasionally discovered fragments of my past and gave mysterious hints, as if her looks were following the strange roads of Destiny in those unequal, confused curves. She told me in brief words that I should have and had had some opportunities, that I was wasting my physical, more than my moral, strength in all kinds of love affairs that did not last long, and that the day when I really loved—or when, to use her expression, I was fairly caught—would be to me the prelude of intense sufferings, a real way of the Cross and of an illness of which I never should be cured. Then, as she examined my line of life, that

which surrounds the thick part of the thumb, the lady in black suddenly grew gloomy, frowned, and appeared to hesitate to go on to the end and continue my horoscope, and said very quickly:

"Your line of life is magnificent, Monsieur; you will live to be sixty at least, but take care not to spend it too freely or to use it immoderately; beware of strong emotions and of any passional crisis, for I remark a gap there in the full vigor of your age, and that gap, that incurable malady which I mentioned to you, is in the line of your heart."

I mastered myself, in order not to smile, and took my leave of her, but everything that she foretold has been realized, and I dare not look at that sinister gap which she saw in my line of life—*for that gap can only mean madness!*

Madness, my poor, dear, adored Elaine!

XVIII

I BECAME as bad and spiteful as if the spirit of hatred had possession of me, and envied those whose life was too happy and who had no cares to trouble them. I could not conceal my pleasure when one of those domestic dramas occurred in which hearts bleed and are broken, in which odious treachery and bitter sufferings are brought to light.

I attended divorce proceedings, with their mis-

erable episodes, with the wranglings of the lawyers and all the unhappiness that they revealed, the exposure of the vanity of dreams, the tricks of women, the lowness of some minds, the foul animal that slumbers in most hearts. They attracted me like a delightful play, a piece which rivets one from the first act to the last. I listened greedily to passionate letters, those mad prayers whose secrets some lawyer violates and which he reads aloud in a mocking tone, and which he gives pell-mell to the bench and to the public, who have come to be amused or to be excited, and to stare at the victims of love.

I followed those proceedings where unfaithfulness was unfolded chapter by chapter in its brutal reality of things that had actually occurred, and for the first time I forgot my own unhappiness in them. Sometimes the husband and wife were there, as if they wished to defy each other, to meet in same last encounter; and, pale and feverish, they watched each other, devoured each other with their eyes, hiding their grief and their misery.

It seemed to me as if I were looking at a heap of ruins, or breathing in the odor of an ambulance in which dying men were groaning, and that those unhappy people were assuaging my trouble somewhat and taking their share of it.

I used to read the advertisements in the personal columns in the newspapers, where the same exalted phrases used to recur, where I read the same de-

spairing adieus, earnest requests for a meeting, echoes of past affection, and vain vows; and all this relieved me, vaguely appeased me, and made me think less about myself—that hateful, incurable *I* whom I longed to destroy!

XIX

The heat was very oppressive and there was not a breath of breeze, and after dinner Elaine wished to go for a drive in the Bois de Boulogne; so we drove in the victoria toward the bridge at Suresnes.

It was growing late, and the dark drives looked like deserted labyrinths and cool retreats where one would have liked to stop late, where the very rustle of the leaves seems to whisper temptations, where there was seduction in the softness of the air and in the infinite music of the silence.

Occasional lights were visible among the trees, and the crescent of the new moon shone like a half-opened gold circle in the serene sky; the green sward, the copses and the small lakes, which gave an uncertain reflection of the surrounding objects, came into sight suddenly, out of the shade; and the intoxicating smell of the hay and of the flower-beds rose from the earth as if from a sachet.

We did not speak, but the jolts of the carriage

occasionally brought us close together, and as if I were being attracted by some irresistible force, I turned to Elaine, and saw that her eyes were full of tears and that she was very pale, and my whole body trembled when I looked at her. Suddenly, as if she could not bear this state of affairs any longer, she threw her arms round my neck, and with her lips almost touching mine she said:

"Why do you not love me any longer? Why do you make me so unhappy? What have I done to you, Jacques?"

She was at my mercy, she was undergoing the influence of the charm of one of those moonlight nights which unstring women's nerves, make them languid, and leave them without a will and without any strength, and I thought that she was about to tell me everything, to confess everything to me, and I had to master myself not to kiss her on her sweet, coaxing lips, but I only replied coldly:

"Do you not know, Elaine? Did you not think that sooner or later I should discover everything that you have been trying to hide from me?"

She sat up in terror, and repeated as if she were in a profound stupor:

"What have I been trying to hide from you?"

I had said too much, and was bound to go on to the end and to finish, even though I repented of it ever afterward; so amid the noise of the carriage I said in a hoarse voice:

"Is it not your fault if I have become estranged

from you? Shall I be the only one to be unhappy, I who loved you so dearly, who believed in you, and whom you have deceived?"

Elaine closed my mouth with her fingers, and breathing hard, with dilated eyes and with such a pale face that I thought she was about to faint, she said hoarsely:

"Be quiet, be quiet, you are frightening me—frightening me as if you were a madman."

That word froze me, and I shivered as if phantoms were appearing among the trees and showing me the place that had been marked out for me by Destiny; I felt inclined to jump from the carriage and to run to the river, which was calling to me yonder in a maternal voice and inviting me to eternal sleep, eternal repose, but Elaine called out to the coachman:

"We will go home, Firmin; drive as fast as you can!"

We did not exchange another word, and during the whole drive Elaine sobbed convulsively, though she tried to hide the sound with her handkerchief, and I understood that it was all finished, *and that I had killed her love.*

XX

Yes, all was ended, and stupidly ended, with-

out the decisive explanation, in which I should find strength to escape from a hateful yoke, and to repudiate the woman who had allured me with false caresses, and who no longer ought to bear my name.

It was either that, or else—who knows?—the happiness, the peace, the love which was not troubled by any evil after-thoughts, that absolute love that I dreamed of between Elaine and myself when I asked for her hand, and of which I was still continually dreaming with the despair of a condemned soul far from Paradise, from which I was suffering, and which would finally kill me.

She prevented me from speaking; with her trembling hand she checked that flow of frenzied words which were about to come from my pained heart, those terrible accusations which an imperious, resistless force incited me to utter; and the terrified words that had escaped from her pale lips froze me again, and penetrated to my marrow as if they had been some piercing wind.

In spite of it all, I was in full possession of my reason; I was not in a passion, and I could not have looked like a fool.

What could she have seen unusual in my eyes that frightened her? What inflections were there in my voice for such an idea suddenly to arise in her brain? But suppose she had *not* made a mistake, suppose I no longer knew what I was saying nor what I was doing, and really had that terrible malady that she had mentioned, and which I cannot name!

It seems to me now as if I could see myself in a mirror of anguish, altogether changed; as if my head were a complete void at times and became something sonorous, and then was struck violent, prolonged blows from a heavy clapper, as if it had been a bell, filling it with tumultuous, deafening vibrations from a kind of loud tocsin and from monotonous peals, that were succeeded by the silence of the grave. And the voice of recollection, a voice which tells me Elaine's mysterious history, which speaks to me only of her, which recalls that first night, that strange night of happiness and of grief, when I doubted her fidelity, when I doubted her heart as well as I did herself, passed slowly through this silence all at once, like the voice of distant music.

Alas! Suppose she had *not* made a mistake!

XXI

I MUST be an object of hatred to her, and I left home without writing her a line, without trying to see her, without bidding her good-by. She may pity me or she may hate me, but she certainly does not love me any longer, and I have myself buried that love, for which I would formerly have given my whole life. As she is young and pretty, however, Elaine will soon console herself for these pass-

ing troubles with some soul that is the shadow of her own; she will replace me, if she has not done that already, and will seek happiness in new environments.

What are she and her friends plotting? What will they try to do to prevent me from interfering with them? What snares will they set for me so that I may go and end my miserable life in some dungeon from which there is no release?

But that is impossible; it can never be. Elaine belongs to me altogether and forever; she is my property, my chattel, my happiness. I adore her, I want her all to myself, *even though she be guilty,* and I never will leave her again for a moment. I will still cling to her petticoats, I will roll at her feet and ask her pardon, for I thirst for her kisses and her love.

To-night, in a few hours, I shall be with her, I shall go into *our* room, and I will cover the cheeks of my fair-haired darling with such kisses that she will no longer think me mad, and if she cries out, if she defends herself and spurns me, I shall kill her; I have made up my mind to that.

I know that I shall strike her with the Arabian knife that is on one of the tables in our room among other knick-knacks. I see the spot where I shall plunge in the sharp blade, into the nape of her neck, which is covered with little, soft, pale golden curls, which are the same color as the hair of her head. This knife attracted me so at one

time, during the chaste period of our engagement, that I used to wish to bite it, as if it had been some kind of fruit. I shall do it some day in the country, when she is bathed in a ray of sunlight, which makes her look dazzling in her pink muslin gown, some day on a towing-path, when the nightingales are singing and the dragonflies, with their reflections of blue and silver, are flying about.

There, there I shall skilfully plunge it in up to the hilt, like those who know how to kill.

XXII

And after I have killed her, what then?

As the judges would not be able to explain such an extraordinary crime to themselves, they would, of course, say that I was mad; medical men would examine me and would immediately agree that I should at once be kept under supervision, taken care of, and placed in a hospital.

And for years, perhaps, because I am strong, and because such a vigorous animal would survive the calamity intact, although my intellect might give way, I should remain a prey to these chimeras, carry about with me that fixed idea of her lies, her impurity and her shame, that would be my one recollection, and I should suffer unceasingly.

I am writing all this in perfect coolness and in

full possession of my reason; I have perfect prescience of what my resolve entails, and of this blind rush toward death. I feel that my very minutes are numbered, and that I no longer have anything in my skull, in which some fire, though I do not quite know what it is, is burning, except a few particles of what used to be my brain.

Just as a short time ago I should certainly have murdered Elaine if she had been with me when invisible hands seemed to be pushing me toward her and inaudible voices ordered me to commit that murder, it is surely most probable that I shall have another crisis, and will there be any awakening from that?

Ah! It will be a thousand times better, since Destiny has left me a half-open door, to escape from life before it is too late, before the free, sane, strong man that I am at present becomes the most pitiable, the most destructive, the most dangerous of human wrecks!

May all these notes of my misery fall into Elaine's hands some day, may she read them to the end, pity and absolve me, and for a long time mourn for me!

(*Here ends Jacques's Journal.*)

MADEMOISELLE PEARL

HOW strange it was for me to choose Mademoiselle Pearl for queen that evening!

Every year I celebrate Twelfth Night with my old friend Chantal. My father, who was his most intimate friend, used to take me there when I was a child. I continued the custom, and doubtless I shall continue it as long as I live and as long as there is a Chantal in this world.

The Chantals lead a peculiar existence; they live in Paris as if they were in Grasse, Yvetot, or Pont-à-Mousson.

They have a house and a little garden near the observatory. They live there as if they were in the country. Of Paris, the real Paris, they know nothing at all, they suspect nothing; they are so far, so far away! Yet from time to time, they take a trip thither. Madame Chantal goes to town to lay in her provisions, as it is called in the family. This is the way they go to purchase their provisions:

Mademoiselle Pearl, who has the keys to the kitchen closet (for the linen closets are adminis-

tered by the mistress herself), Mademoiselle Pearl gives warning that the supply of sugar is low, that the preserves are giving out, that not much is left in the bottom of the coffee bag. Thus warned against sudden famine, Madame Chantal passes everything in review, making notes on a pad. Then she puts down the figures and goes through long calculations and discussions with Mademoiselle Pearl. At last they come to an agreement, and decide upon the quantity of each thing of which they will lay in three months' provisions: sugar, rice, prunes, coffee, preserves, cans of peas, beans, lobster, salt or smoked fish, etc. The day for the purchasing is then fixed and they go in a cab with a railing round the top and drive to a large grocery on the other side of the river in new parts of the town.

Madame Chantal and Mademoiselle Pearl make this trip together, mysteriously, and do not return till dinner-time, tired out, although still excited, and shaken up by the cab, the roof of which is covered with bundles and bags, like an express wagon.

For the Chantals all that part of Paris on the other side of the Seine constitutes the new quarter, a section inhabited by a strange, noisy population, which cares little for honor, spends its days in dissipation, its nights in revelry, and throws money out of the windows. From time to time, however, the young girls are taken to the Opéra-Comique or the Théâtre Français, when the play is recommended by the paper that is read by M. Chantal.

At present the young ladies are respectively nineteen and seventeen. They are pretty girls, tall and fresh, very well brought up, in fact, too well brought up, so much so that they pass by unperceived like two pretty dolls. Never would the idea come to me to pay the slightest attention or to pay court to one of the young Chantals; they are so immaculate that one hardly dares speak to them; one almost feels indecent when bowing to them.

As for the father, he is a charming man, well educated, frank and cordial, but he likes calm and quiet above all else, and has thus contributed greatly to the mummifying of his family in order to live as he pleased in stagnant quiescence. He reads much, loves to talk and is readily affected. Lack of contact and of elbowing with the world has made his moral skin very sensitive. The slightest thing excites him and makes him suffer.

The Chantals have limited connections carefully chosen in the neighborhood. They also exchange two or three yearly visits with relatives who live at a distance.

As for me, I take dinner with them on the fifteenth of August and on Twelfth Night. That is as much one of my duties as Easter communion is for a Catholic. On the fifteenth of August a few friends are invited, but on Twelfth Night I am the only stranger.

This year, as every former year, I went to the Chantals' for my Epiphany dinner. According to

my usual custom, I kissed M. Chantal, Madame Chantal and Mademoiselle Pearl, and I made a low bow to the Misses Louise and Pauline. I was questioned about a thousand and one things—about what had happened on the boulevards, about politics, about how matters stood in Tong-King, and about our representatives in Parliament. Madame Chantal, a fat lady, whose ideas always gave me the impression of being carved out square like building-stones, was accustomed to exclaim after every political discussion: "All that is seed which does not promise much for the future!" Why have I always imagined that Madame Chantal's ideas are square? I don't know; but everything that she says takes that shape in my head: a big square, with four symmetrical angles. There are other people whose ideas always strike me as being round and rolling like a hoop. As soon as they begin a sentence on any subject it rolls on and on, coming out in ten, twenty, fifty round ideas, large and small, which I see rolling along, one behind the other, to the end of the horizon. Other people have pointed ideas—but enough of this.

We sat down as usual and finished our dinner without anything out of the ordinary being said. At dessert, the Twelfth Night cake was brought on. Now, M. Chantal had been king every year. I don't know whether this was the result of continued chance or a family convention, but he unfailingly found the bean in his piece of cake, and he would

proclaim Madame Chantal to be queen. Therefore, I was greatly surprised to find something hard, which almost broke a tooth, in a mouthful of cake. Gently I took this thing from my mouth and I saw that it was a little porcelain doll, no bigger than a bean. Surprise caused me to exclaim: "Ah!" All looked at me, and Chantal clapped his hands and cried: "It's Gaston! It's Gaston! Long live the king! Long live the king!"

All took up the chorus: "Long live the king!" And I blushed to the tips of my ears, as one often does, without any reason at all, in situations which are a little foolish. I sat there looking at my plate, with this absurd little bit of china in my fingers, forcing myself to laugh and not knowing what to do or say, when Chantal once more cried out: "Now you must choose a queen!"

Then I was thunderstruck. In a second a thousand thoughts and suppositions flashed through my mind. Did they expect me to pick out one of the young Chantal ladies? Was that a trick to make me say which one I preferred? Was it a gentle, light, direct hint of the parents toward a possible marriage? The idea of marriage roams continually in houses with grown-up girls, and takes every shape and disguise, and employs every subterfuge. A dread of compromising myself took hold of me, as well as an extreme timidity before the obstinately correct and reserved attitude of the Misses Louise and Pauline. To choose one of them in preference

to the other seemed as difficult as choosing between two drops of water; and then the fear of launching myself into an affair that might, in spite of me, lead me gently into matrimonial ties, by means as wary and imperceptible and as calm as this insignificant royalty—the fear of all this haunted me.

Suddenly I had an inspiration, and I held out to Mademoiselle Pearl the symbolical emblem. At first every one was surprised, then they doubtless appreciated my delicacy and discretion, for they applauded furiously. Everybody cried: "Long live the queen! Long live the queen!"

As for herself, poor old maid, she was so amazed that she completely lost control of herself; she was trembling and stammering; "No—no—oh! no—not me—please—not me—I beg of you——"

Then for the first time in my life I looked at Mademoiselle Pearl and wondered what she was.

I was accustomed to seeing her in this house, just as one sees old upholstered armchairs on which one has been sitting since childhood without ever noticing them. One day, with no reason at all, because a ray of sunshine happens to strike the seat, you suddenly think: "Why, that chair is very curious;" and then you discover that the wood has been worked by a real artist, and that the material is remarkable. I never had taken any notice of Mademoiselle Pearl.

She was a part of the Chantal family, that was all. But how? By what right? She was a tall,

thin person keeping herself in the background, but was by no means insignificant. She was treated in a friendly manner, better than a housekeeper, not so well as a relative. I suddenly observed several shades of distinction which I had not noticed before. Madame Chantal said: "Pearl." The young ladies: "Mademoiselle Pearl," and Chantal only addressed her as "Mademoiselle," with an air of greater respect, perhaps.

I began to observe her. How old could she be? Forty? Yes, forty. She was not old, she made herself old. I was suddenly struck by this fact. She arranged her hair and dressed in a ridiculous manner, and, notwithstanding all that, she was not in the least ridiculous, she had such simple, natural gracefulness, veiled and hidden. What a strange creature! How was it that I had not observed her before? She dressed her hair in a grotesque manner with little old-maid curls, most absurd; but beneath this one could see a large, calm brow, cut by two deep lines, two wrinkles of long sadness, then two blue eyes, large and tender, so timid, so bashful, so humble, two beautiful eyes which had kept the expression of naïve wonder of a young girl, of youthful sensations, and also of sorrow, which had softened without spoiling them.

Her whole face was refined and discreet, a face the expression of which seemed to have gone out without being used up or faded by the fatigues and great emotions of life. What a dainty mouth! and

such pretty teeth! But one would have thought that she did not dare smile.

Suddenly I compared her with Madame Chantal! Undoubtedly Mademoiselle Pearl was the better of the two, a hundred times better, daintier, prouder, more noble. I was surprised at my observation. They were serving champagne. I held my glass up to the queen and, with a well-turned compliment, I drank to her health. I could see that she felt inclined to hide her face in her napkin. Then, as she was dipping her lips in the clear wine, everybody cried: "The queen drinks! the queen drinks!" She almost turned purple and choked. Everybody was laughing; but I could see that they all loved her.

As soon as dinner was over Chantal took me by the arm. It was time for his cigar, a sacred hour. When alone he would smoke it out in the street; when guests came to dinner he would take them to the billiard-room and smoke while playing. That evening they had built a fire to celebrate Twelfth Night. My old friend took his cue, a very fine one, and chalked it with great care; then he said:

"You break, my boy!"

He called me "my boy," although I was twenty-five, but he had known me as a child.

I began the game and made a few caroms. I missed some others, but as the thought of Mademoiselle Pearl kept returning to my mind, I said:

"By the way, Monsieur Chantal, is Mademoiselle Pearl a relative of yours?"

Greatly surprised, he stopped playing and looked at me:

"What! Don't you know? Haven't you heard about Mademoiselle Pearl?"

"No."

"Didn't your father ever tell you?"

"No."

"Well, well, that's strange! That certainly is strange! Why, it's a regular romance!"

He paused, and then continued:

"And if you only knew how peculiar it is that you should ask me that to-day, on Twelfth Night!"

"Why?"

"Why? Well, listen. Forty-one years ago to-day, the day of the Epiphany, the following events occurred: We were then living at Roüy-le-Tors, on the ramparts; but in order that you may understand, I must first explain the house. Roüy is built on a hill, or, rather on a mound that overlooks a great stretch of prairie. We had a house there, with a beautiful hanging garden supported by the old battlemented wall; so that the house was in the town on the streets, while the garden overlooked the plain. There was a door leading from the garden to the open country, at the bottom of a secret stairway in the thick wall—the kind you read about in novels. A road passed in front of this door, which was provided with a big bell; for the peasants would bring their provisions up this way. because it was the shorter.

"You now understand the place, don't you? Well, this year, at Epiphany, it had been snowing for a week. One might have thought the world was coming to an end. When we went to the ramparts to look over the plain, this immense white, frozen country, which shone like varnish, would chill our very souls. It appeared as if the Lord had packed the world in cotton to put it away in the store-room for old worlds. I can assure you it was a dreary prospect.

"We were a very numerous family at that time: my father, my mother, my uncle and aunt, my two brothers and four cousins; they were pretty little girls; I married the youngest. Of all that group only three of us are left: my wife, I, and my sister-in-law, who lives in Marseilles. Zounds! how quickly a family like that dwindles away! I tremble when I think of it. I was fifteen years old then, since I am fifty-six now.

"We were about to celebrate the Epiphany, and were all happy, very happy! Everybody was in the parlor, awaiting dinner, and my oldest brother, Jacques, said: 'A dog has been howling out in the plain for about ten minutes; the poor beast must be lost.'

"He had hardly stopped talking when the garden bell rang. It had the deep sound of a church bell, which made one think of death. A shiver ran through everybody. My father called the servant and told him to go outside and look. We waited

in complete silence; we were thinking of the snow that covered the ground. When the man returned he declared that he had seen nothing. The dog kept up its ceaseless howling, and always from the same spot.

"We sat down to dinner; but we were all uneasy, especially the young people. Everything went well up to the roast, then the bell began to ring again, three times in succession, three heavy, long strokes, which vibrated to the tips of our fingers and stopped our conversation short. We sat there looking at each other, fork in the air, still listening, and shaken by a kind of supernatural fear.

"At last my mother spoke: 'It's surprising that they should have waited so long to come back. Do not go alone, Baptiste; one of these gentlemen will accompany you.'

"My Uncle François arose. He was a kind of Hercules, very proud of his strength, and feared nothing in the world. My father said to him: 'Take a gun. There is no telling what it might be.'

"But my uncle took only a cane and went out with the servant.

"The others remained there trembling with fear and apprehension, without eating or speaking. My father tried to reassure us: 'Just wait and see,' he said; 'it must be some beggar or some traveler lost in the snow. After ringing once, seeing that the door was not immediately opened, he attempted again to find his way, and being unable to, he has returned to our door.'

"Our uncle seemed to stay away an hour. At last he came back, furious, swearing: 'Nothing at all; it's some practical joker! There is nothing but that damned dog howling away at about a hundred yards from the walls. If I had taken a gun I would have killed him to make him keep quiet.'

"We sat down to dinner again, but every one was excited; we felt that all was not over, that something was going to happen, that the bell would soon ring again.

"It rang just as the Twelfth Night cake was being cut. All the men jumped up together. My Uncle François, who had been drinking champagne, swore so furiously that he would murder *it,* whatever it might be, that my mother and my aunt threw themselves on him to prevent his going. My father, although very calm and a little helpless (he had limped ever since he broke his leg when thrown by a horse), declared, in turn, that he wished to find out what was the matter, and that he was going. My brothers, aged eighteen and twenty, ran to get their guns; and as no one was paying any attention to me I snatched up a little rifle that was used in the garden and got ready to accompany the expedition.

"It set out immediately. My father and uncle were walking ahead with Baptiste, who was carrying a lantern. My brothers, Jacques and Paul, followed, and I trailed on in spite of the prayers of my mother, who stood in front of the house with her sister and my cousins.

"It had been snowing again for an hour, and the trees were weighted down. The pines were bending under this heavy garment, and looked like white pyramids or enormous sugar-cones, and through the gray curtains of small hurrying flakes could be seen the lighter bushes, which stood out pale in the shadow. The snow was falling so thick that we could hardly see ten feet ahead of us. But the lantern threw a bright light immediately around us. When we began to go down the winding stairway in the wall I really grew frightened. I felt as if someone were walking behind me, were going to grab me by the shoulders and carry me away, and I felt a strong desire to return; but, as I would have had to cross the garden all alone, I did not dare. I heard someone opening the door leading to the plain; my uncle began to swear again, exclaiming: 'By ——! He has gone again! If I catch sight of even his shadow, I'll take care not to miss him, the swine!'

"It was a discouraging thing to see this great expanse of plain, or, rather, to feel it before us, for we could not see it; we could only see a thick, endless veil of snow, above, below, opposite, to the right, to the left, everywhere. My uncle continued: 'Listen! There is the dog howling again; I will teach him how I shoot. That will be something gained, anyhow.'

"But my father, who was kind-hearted, said: 'It will be much better to go on and get the poor

animal, which is crying for hunger. The poor fellow is barking for help; he is calling like a man in distress. Let us go to him.'

"So we set out through the mist, through the thick, continuous fall of snow, which filled the air, which moved, floated, fell, and chilled the skin with a burning sensation like a sharp, rapid pain as each flake melted. We were sinking up to our knees in this soft, cold mass, and we had to lift our feet very high in order to walk. As we advanced the dog's voice became clearer and stronger. My uncle cried: 'Here he is!' We stopped to observe him as one does when he meets an enemy at night.

"I could see nothing, so I ran up to the others, and I caught sight of him; he was frightful and weird-looking; he was a big black shepherd's dog with long hair and a wolf's head, standing just within the gleam of light cast by our lantern on the snow. He did not move; he was silently watching us.

"My uncle said: 'That's peculiar, he is neither advancing nor retreating. I feel like shooting him.'

"My father answered firmly: 'No, we must capture him.'

"Then my brother Jacques added: 'But he is not alone. There is something behind him.'

"There was indeed something behind him, something gray, impossible to distinguish. We advanced again cautiously. When he saw us approaching the dog sat down. He did not look wicked. Instead,

he seemed pleased at having been able to attract some one's attention.

"My father went straight to him and petted him. The dog licked his hands. We saw that he was tied to the wheel of a little carriage, a sort of toy carriage entirely wrapped up in three or four woolen blankets. We carefully took off these coverings, and as Baptiste held his lantern to the front of this little vehicle, which looked like a rolling kennel, we saw in it a little baby sleeping peacefully.

"We were so astonished that we couldn't speak. My father was the first to collect his wits, and as he had a warm heart and a broad mind, he stretched his hand over the roof of the carriage, and said: 'Poor little waif, you shall be one of us!' And he ordered my brother Jacques to roll the foundling ahead of us. Thinking aloud, my father continued:

" 'Some child of love, whose poor mother rang at my door on this night of Epiphany in memory of the Child of God.'

"He once more stopped and called at the top of his lungs to the four corners of the heavens: 'We have found it!' Then, putting his hand on his brother's shoulder, he murmured: 'What if you had shot the dog, François?'

"My uncle did not answer, but in the darkness he crossed himself, for, notwithstanding his blustering manner, he was very religious.

"The dog, which had been untied, was following us.

"Ah! But you should have seen us when we got to the house! At first we had great trouble in getting the carriage up through the winding stairway; but we succeeded and even rolled it into the vestibule.

"How funny mamma was! How happy and astonished! And my four little cousins (the youngest was only six), they looked like four chickens around a nest. At last we took the child from the carriage. It was still sleeping. It was a girl about six weeks old. In its clothes we found ten thousand francs in gold, yes, my boy, ten thousand francs!—which papa saved for her dowry. Therefore, it was not a child of poor people, but, perhaps, the child of some nobleman and a little bourgeoise of the town—or again—we made a thousand suppositions, but we never found out anything—never the slightest cue. The dog was recognized by no one. He was a stranger in our country. The person who rang three times at our door must have known my parents well, to have chosen them thus.

"That is the way Mademoiselle Pearl entered the Chantal household at the age of six weeks.

"Later she was called Mademoiselle Pearl. She was at first baptized 'Marie Simonne Claire,' Claire being intended for her family name.

"I can assure you that our return to the dining-room was amusing, with this baby now awake and looking round her at the people and the lights with her vague blue questioning eyes.

"We sat down to dinner again and the cake was cut. I was king, and for queen I took Mademoiselle Pearl, just as you did to-day. On that day she did not appreciate the honor that was being shown her.

"The child was adopted and brought up in the family. She grew, and the years flew by. She was so gentle and loving and minded so well that every one would have spoiled her abominably had not my mother prevented it.

"My mother was an elderly woman with a great respect for class distinctions. She consented to treat little Claire as she did her own sons, but, nevertheless, she wished the distance that separated us to be well marked, and our positions well established. Therefore, as soon as the child could understand, she acquainted her with her story and gently impressed on the little one's mind that, for the Chantals, she was an adopted daughter, taken in, but, nevertheless, a stranger. Claire understood the situation with peculiar intelligence and with surprising instinct; she knew how to take the place that was allotted to her, and to keep it with so much tact, gracefulness and gentleness that she often brought tears to my father's eyes. My mother herself was often so moved by the passionate gratitude and timid devotion of this little creature that she began calling her: 'My daughter.' At times, when the little one had done something kind and good, my mother would raise her spectacles on her fore-

head, a thing that always indicated emotion with her, and would repeat: 'This child is a pearl, a perfect pearl!' This name stuck to the little Claire, who became and remained for us Mademoiselle Pearl.'

M. Chantal stopped. He was sitting on the edge of the billiard-table, his feet hanging, and was play- with a ball with his left hand, while with his right he crumpled a rag that served to rub the chalk marks from the slate. A little red in the face, his voice thick, he was talking away to himself now, lost in his memories, gently drifting through old scenes and events that awoke in his mind, just as we walk through old family gardens where we were brought up and where each tree, each walk, each hedge reminds us of some occurrence.

I stood opposite him, leaning against the wall, my hands resting on my idle cue. After a slight pause he continued:

"By Jove! She was pretty at eighteen—and graceful—and perfect. Ah! She was so sweet—and good and true—and charming! She had such eyes—blue—transparent—clear—such eyes as I never have seen since!"

He was once more silent. I asked: "Why did she never marry?"

He answered, not to me, but to the word "marry" which had caught his ear: "Why, why? She never would—she never would! She had a dowry of thirty thousand francs, and she received several

offers—but she never would! She seemed sad at that time. That was when I married my cousin, little Charlotte, my wife, to whom I had been engaged for six years."

I looked at M. Chantal, and it seemed to me that I was looking into his very soul, and I was suddenly witnessing one of those humble and cruel tragedies of honest, straightforward, blameless hearts, one of those secret tragedies known to no one, not even the silent and resigned victims. A rash curiosity suddenly impelled me to exclaim:

"*You* should have married her, Monsieur Chantal!"

He started, looked at me, and said:

"I? Marry whom?"

"Mademoiselle Pearl."

"Why?"

"Because you loved her more than your cousin."

He stared at me with strange, round, bewildered eyes and stammered:

"I loved her—I? How? Who told you that?"

"Why, anyone can see that—and it's even on account of her that you delayed for so long your marriage to your cousin, who had been waiting for you for six years."

He dropped the ball that he was holding in his left hand, and, seizing the chalk-rag in both hands, he buried his face in it and began to sob. He was weeping with his eyes, nose and mouth, in a heart-breaking yet ridiculous manner, like a sponge that

one squeezes. He was coughing, spitting and blowing his nose in the chalk rag, wiping his eyes and sneezing; then the tears would flow again down the wrinkles on his face and he would make a strange gurgling noise in his throat. I felt bewildered, ashamed; I wanted to run away, and I no longer knew what to say, do, or attempt.

Suddenly Madame Chantal's voice sounded on the stairs. "Haven't you men almost finished your cigars?"

I opened the door and cried: "Yes, Madame, we are coming right down."

Then seizing him by the shoulders, I cried: "Monsieur Chantal, my friend Chantal, listen to me; your wife is calling; pull yourself together, we must go downstairs."

He stammered: "Yes—yes—I am coming—poor girl! I am coming—tell her that I am coming."

He began conscientiously to wipe his face on the cloth which, for the last two or three years, had been used for marking off the chalk from the slate; then he appeared, half white and half red, his forehead, nose, cheeks and chin covered with chalk, and his eyes swollen, still full of tears.

I caught him by the hands and dragged him into his bedroom, muttering: "I beg your pardon, I beg your pardon, Monsieur Chantal, for having caused you such sorrow—but—I did not know—you—you understand."

He squeezed my hand, saying: "Yes—yes—there are difficult moments."

Then he plunged his face into a bowl of water. When he emerged from it he did not yet seem to me to be presentable; but I thought of a little stratagem. As he was growing worried, looking at himself in the mirror, I said to him: "All you have to do is to say that a little dust flew into your eye and you can cry before everybody to your heart's content."

He went downstairs rubbing his eyes with his handkerchief. All were worried; each one wished to look for the speck, which could not be found; and stories were told of similar cases where it had been necessary to call in a physician.

I went over to Mademoiselle Pearl and watched her, tormented by an ardent curiosity, which was turning to positive suffering. She must indeed have been pretty, with her gentle, calm eyes, so large that it looked as if she never closed them like other mortals. Her gown was a little ridiculous, a real old maid's gown, unbecoming without appearing clumsy.

It seemed to me that I was looking into her soul, just as I had into Monsieur Chantal's; that I saw right from one end to the other of this humble life, so simple and devoted. I felt an irresistible longing to question her, to find out whether she had loved him; whether she also had suffered, as he had, from this long, secret, poignant grief, which one cannot see, know, or guess, but which breaks forth at night in the loneliness of the dark room.

I was watching her, and I could observe her heart beating under her bodice, and I wondered whether this sweet, candid face had wept on the soft pillow, her whole body shaken by the violence of her anguish.

I said to her in a low voice, like a child who is breaking a toy to see what is inside: "If you could have seen Monsieur Chantal crying a while ago it would have moved you."

She started, and asked: "What? He was weeping?"

"Ah, yes, he was indeed weeping!"

"Why?"

She seemed deeply moved. I answered:

"On your account."

"On my account?"

"Yes. He was telling me how much he had loved you in the days gone by; and what a pang it had given him to marry his cousin instead of you."

Her pale face seemed to grow a little longer; her calm eyes, which always remained open, suddenly closed so quickly that they seemed shut forever. She slipped from her chair to the floor, and slowly, gently sank as would a fallen garment.

I cried: "Help! help! Mademoiselle Pearl is ill."

Madame Chantal and her daughters rushed forward, and while they were looking for towels, water and vinegar, I seized my hat and ran away.

I walked with rapid strides, my heart heavy, my mind full of remorse and regret. And yet some-

times I felt pleased; I felt that I had done a praiseworthy and necessary act. I was asking myself: "Did I do wrong or right?" They had that shut up in their hearts, just as some people carry a bullet in a closed wound. Will they not be happier now? It was too late for their torture to begin over again, yet early enough for them to remember it with tenderness.

And perhaps some evening next spring, moved by a beam of moonlight falling through the branches on the grass at their feet, they will join and press their hands in memory of all this cruel and suppressed suffering; and, perhaps, also this short embrace may infuse in their veins a little of the thrill they would not have known without it, and will give to those two dead souls, brought to life in a second, the rapid and divine sensation of that intoxication, that madness, which gives to lovers more happiness in an instant than other men find in a lifetime.

THE FARMER'S WIFE

BARON RENÉ DU TREILLES said to me: "My dear boy, will you open the hunting season with me at my farm at Marinville? I shall be delighted if you will. In the first place, I am all alone. It is rather a difficult ground to get at, and the place where I live is so primitive that I can invite only my most intimate friends."

I accepted his invitation, and on Saturday we boarded the train for Normandy. We alighted at a station called Almivare, and Baron René, pointing to a country wagonette drawn by a timid horse and driven by a big countryman with white hair, said:

"Here is our equipage."

The driver extended his hand to his landlord, and the Baron pressed it warmly, asking:

"Maître Lebrument, how are you?"

"Always the same, M'sieu le Baron."

We jumped into this swinging hencoop perched on two enormous wheels, and the young horse, after a violent swerve, started into a gallop, pitching us into the air like balls. Every fall backward on

the wooden bench gave me the greatest discomfort.

The peasant kept repeating in his calm, monotonous voice:

"There, there! All right, all right, Moutard, all right!"

But Moutard hardly heard, and capered along like a goat.

Our two dogs behind us, in the rear part of the hencoop, were standing up and sniffing the air of the plains, where they scented game.

The Baron gazed with a sad eye into the distance at the vast Norman landscape, undulating and melancholy, like an immense English park, where the farmyards, surrounded by two or four rows of trees and full of dwarf apple-trees which hid the houses, gave a vista as far as the eye could see of forest trees, copses, and shrubbery such as landscape gardeners look for in laying out the boundaries of princely estates.

And René du Treilles suddenly exclaimed:

"I love this soil; I have my very roots in it."

He was a pure Norman, tall and strong, with a slight paunch, and of the old race of adventurers who went to found kingdoms on the shores of every ocean. He was about fifty years of age, ten years younger perhaps than the farmer who was driving us.

The latter was a lean peasant, all skin and bone, one of those men who live a hundred years.

After two hours' traveling over stony roads,

across that green, monotonous plain, the vehicle entered one of those orchard farmyards and drew up before an old structure falling to decay, where an old maid-servant was waiting by the side of a young fellow, who took charge of the horse.

We entered the farmhouse. The smoky kitchen was high and spacious. The copper utensils and the crockery shone in the reflection of the fire on the hearth. A cat lay asleep on a chair, a dog under the table. I perceived the odor of milk, of apples, of smoke, that indescribable smell peculiar to old farmhouses, the odor of the earth of the walls, of furniture, the odor of spilled stale soup, of washing, and of the old inhabitants, the smell of animals and of human beings combined, of things and of persons, the odor of time, and of things that have passed away.

I went out to have a look at the farmyard. It was very large, full of apple-trees, dwarfed and crooked, and laden with fruit, which fell on the grass around them. In this farmyard the Norman smell of apples was as strong as that of the bloom of orange-trees on the shores of the south of France.

Four rows of beeches surrounded this inclosure. They were so tall that they appeared to touch the clouds at this hour of nightfall, and their summits, through which the night winds passed, swayed and sang a mournful, interminable song.

I re-entered the house.

The Baron was warming his feet at the fire, and was listening to the farmer's talk. He talked about marriages, births, and deaths, then about the fall in the price of grain and the latest news concerning cattle. The "Veularde" (as he called a cow that had been bought at the fair of Veules) had calved in the middle of June. The cider had not been first-class last year. Apricots were almost disappearing from the country.

Then we had dinner. It was a good rustic meal, simple and abundant, long and tranquil. And while we were dining I noticed a special friendly familiarity which had struck me from the start between the Baron and the peasant.

Outside, the beeches continued sighing in the night wind, and our two dogs, shut up in a shed, were whining and howling in an uncanny fashion. The fire was dying out in the big fireplace. The maid-servant had retired. Maître Lebrument said in his turn:

"If you don't mind, M'sieu le Baron, I'm going to bed. I am not used to staying up late."

The Baron extended his hand toward him and said: "Go, my friend," in so cordial a tone that I said, as soon as the man had disappeared:

"He is devoted to you, this farmer?"

"Better than that, my dear fellow! It is a drama, an old drama, simple and very sad, that attaches him to me. Here is the story:

"You know my father was a colonel in a cavalry

regiment. His orderly was this young fellow, now an old man, son of a farmer. When my father retired from the army he took this former soldier, then abouty forty, as his servant. At that time I was about thirty. We were living in our old château of Valrenne, near Caudebec-en-Caux.

"At this period my mother's chambermaid was one of the prettiest girls you could see, fair-haired, slender, and sprightly in manner, a genuine soubrette of the old type that no longer exists. To-day these creatures spring up into hussies before their time. Paris, with the aid of railways, attracts them, calls them, takes hold of them, as soon as they are budding into womanhood, these little sluts who in old times remained simple maid-servants. Every man passing by—as recruiting sergeants did formerly, looking for recruits, with conscripts—entices and ruins them—these foolish lassies—and we have now only the scum of the female sex for servant-maids, all that is dull, common, and ill-formed, too ugly even for gallantry.

"Well, this girl was charming, and I often gave her a kiss in dark corners; nothing more, I swear to you! She was virtuous, besides; and I had some respect for my mother's house, which is more than can be said of the blackguards of the present day.

"Now, it happened that my man-servant, the ex-soldier, the old farmer you have just seen, fell madly in love with this girl, absolutely daft. The first thing we noticed was that he forgot everything, paid no attention to anything.

"My father said frequently:

" 'See here, Jean, what's the matter with you? Are you ill?'

"He replied:

" 'No, no, M'sieu le Baron. There's nothing the matter with me.'

"He grew thin; when waiting on the table, he broke glasses and let plates fall. We thought he must have been attacked by some nervous affection, and we sent for the doctor, who thought he detected symptoms of spinal disease. Then my father, full of anxiety about his faithful man-servant, decided to place him in a private hospital. When the poor fellow heard of my father's intentions he made a clean breast of it.

" 'M'sieu le Baron——'

" 'Well, my boy?'

" 'You see, the thing I want is not physic.'

" 'Ha! what is it, then?'

" 'It's marriage!'

"My father turned round and stared at him in astonishment.

" 'What's that you say, eh?'

" 'It's marriage.'

" 'Marriage. So, then, you jackass, you're in love.'

" 'That's how it is, M'sieu le Baron.'

"And my father began to laugh so immoderately that my mother called out from the next room:

" 'What in the world is the matter with you, Gontran?'

"He replied:

" 'Come here, Catherine.'

"And when she came in he told her, with tears of laughter in his eyes, that his idiot of a servant-man was lovesick.

"But my mother, instead of laughing, was deeply affected.

" 'Who is it that you have fallen in love with, my poor fellow?' she asked.

"He answered without hesitation:

" 'With Louise, Madame le Baronne.'

"My mother said with the utmost gravity: 'We must try to arrange this matter the best way we can.'

"So Louise was sent for and questioned by my mother; and she said in reply that she knew all about Jean's liking for her, that in fact Jean had spoken to her about it several times, but that she did not want him. She refused to say why.

"And two months elapsed during which my father and mother never ceased to urge this girl to marry Jean. As she declared she was not in love with any other man, she could not give any serious reason for her refusal. My father at last overcame her resistance by means of a big present of money, and set up the pair on a farm—this very farm. I did not see them for three years, and then I learned that Louise had died of consumption.

But my father and mother died, too, in their turn, and it was two years more before I found myself face-to-face with Jean.

"At last one day about the end of October I took a notion to go hunting on this part of my estate, which my farmer had told me was full of game.

"So one evening, one wet evening, I arrived at this house. I was shocked to find my father's old servant with perfectly white hair, though he was not more than forty-six years of age. I made him dine with me, at the very table where we are now sitting. It was raining hard. We could hear the rain battering at the roof, the walls, and the windows, flowing in a perfect deluge into the farmyard; and my dog was howling in the shed where the other dogs are howling to-night.

"All of a sudden, when the servant-maid had gone to bed, the man said in a timid voice:

" 'M'sieu le Baron.'

" 'What is it, my dear Jean?'

" 'I have something to tell you.'

" 'Tell it, my dear Jean.'

" 'You remember Louise, my wife.'

" 'Certainly, I remember her.'

" 'Well, she left me a message for you.'

" 'What was it?'

" 'A—a—well, it was what you might call a confession.'

" 'Ha! and what was it about?'

" 'It was—it was—I'd rather, all the same, tell

you nothing about it—but I must—I must. Well, it's this—it wasn't consumption she died of at all. It was grief—well, that's the long and short of it. As soon as she came to live here after we were married, she grew thin; she changed so that you would not know her, M'sieu le Baron. She was as I was before I married her, but it was just the opposite, just the opposite.

" 'I sent for the doctor. He said it was her liver that was affected—he said it was what he called a "hepatic" complaint—I don't know these big words, M'sieu le Baron. Then I bought medicines for her, heaps on heaps of bottles that cost about three hundred francs. But she'd take none of them; she wouldn't have them; she said: "It's no use, my poor Jean; it wouldn't do me any good." I saw well that she had some hidden trouble; and then one day I found her crying, and I didn't know what to do, no, I didn't know what to do. I bought her caps, and dresses, and hair-oil, and earrings. Nothing did her any good. And I saw that she was going to die. And so one night at the end of November, one snowy night, after she had been in bed the whole day, she told me to send for the curé. So I went for him. As soon as he came—

" '"Jean," she said, "I am going to make a confession to you. I owe it to you, Jean. I never have been false to you, never! never, before or after you married me. M'sieu le Curé is there, and can tell you so; he knows my soul. Well, listen,

Jean. If I am dying, it is because I was not able to console myself for leaving the château, because I was too fond of the young Baron, Monsieur René, too fond of him. Mind you, Jean, there was no harm in it! This is the thing that's killing me. When I could see him no more I felt that I should die. If I could only have seen him, I might have lived, only seen him, nothing more. I wish you'd tell him some day, by and by, when I am no longer here. You will tell him, swear you will, Jean—swear it—in the presence of M'sieu le Curé! It will console me to know that he will know it one day, that this was the cause of my death! Swear it!"

" 'Well, I gave her my promise, M'sieu le Baron, and on the faith of an honest man I have kept my word.'

"And then he ceased speaking, his eyes filling with tears.

"Good God! my dear boy, you can't form any idea of the emotion that filled me when I heard this poor devil, whose wife I had killed without suspecting it, telling me this story on that wet night in this very kitchen.

"I exclaimed: 'Ah! my poor Jean! my poor Jean!'

"He murmured: 'Well, that's all, M'sieu le Baron. I could not help it, one way or the other—and now it's all over!'

"I caught his hand across the table, and I began to weep.

"He asked: 'Will you come and see her grave?' I nodded assent, for I couldn't speak. He rose and lighted a lantern, and we walked through the blinding rain by its light.

"He opened a gate, and I saw some crosses of black wood.

"Suddenly he stopped before a marble slab and said: 'There it is,' and he flashed the lantern close to it so that I could read the inscription:

" 'To Louise Hortense Marinet,
" '*Wife of Jean-François Lebrument, Farmer.*
" 'She was a faithful wife. God rest her soul.'

"We fell on our knees in the damp grass, he and I, with the lantern between us, and I saw the rain beating on the white marble slab. And I thought of the heart of her sleeping there in her grave. Ah! poor heart! poor heart!

"Since then I come here every year. And I don't know why, but I feel as if I were guilty of some crime in the presence of this man, who always looks as if he forgave me."

A COWARD

HE was called "Handsome Signoles" in society, but his proper name and title were Vicomte Gontran-Joseph de Signoles.

An orphan, and possessing an ample fortune, he cut quite a dash, as it is called. He had an attractive appearance and manner, could talk well, had a certain instinctive elegance, an air of pride and nobility, a fine moustache, and a tender eye, which always finds favor with women.

He was in great demand at receptions, waltzed to perfection, and was regarded by his own sex with that smiling hostility accorded to the popular society man. He had been suspected of more than one love affair calculated to enhance the reputation of a bachelor. He lived a happy, peaceful life—a life of physical and mental well-being. He had won considerable fame as a swordsman, and still more as a fine shot.

"When the time comes for me to fight a duel," he said, "I shall choose pistols. With that weapon I am sure to kill my man."

One evening, having accompanied two woman

friends of his with their husbands to the theater, he invited them to take some ices at Tortoni's after the performance. They had been seated a few minutes in the restaurant when Signoles noticed that a man was staring persistently at one of the ladies. She seemed annoyed, and cast down her eyes. At last she said to her husband:

"A man over there is looking at me. I don't know him; do you?"

The husband, who had noticed nothing, glanced across at the offender, and said:

"No; not at all."

His wife continued, half smiling, half angry:

"It is very annoying! He quite spoils my ice."

The husband shrugged his shoulders.

"Nonsense! Don't take any notice of him. If we were to heed all ill-mannered persons we should have no time for anything else."

But the Viscount abruptly left his seat. He could not allow this insolent fellow to spoil an ice for a guest of his. It was for him to take cognizance of the offense, since it was through him that his friends had come to the restaurant. He approached the man and said:

"Monsieur, you are staring at those ladies in a manner I cannot permit. I must ask you to desist from your rudeness."

"Let me alone, will you?" the other replied.

"Take care, Monsieur," said the Viscount between his teeth, "or you will force me to extreme measures."

The man replied with a single word—a vile word, which could be heard from one end of the restaurant to the other, and which startled everyone. All whose backs were toward the two disputants turned round; the others raised their heads; three waiters spun around on their heels like tops; the two woman cashiers jumped, as if shot, then turned their bodies simultaneously, like automata worked by the same spring.

There was dead silence. Then suddenly came a sharp, crisp sound. The Viscount had slapped his adversary's face. Everyone rose to interfere. Cards were exchanged.

When the Viscount reached home he walked rapidly up and down his room for some minutes. He was in a state of too great agitation to think connectedly. One idea alone possessed him: a duel. But this aroused in him as yet no emotion of any kind. He had done what he was bound to do; he had proved himself to be what he ought to be. He would be talked about, approved, congratulated. He repeated aloud, speaking as one does when under the stress of great mental disturbance:

"What a brute of a man!"

Then he sat down and began to reflect. He must find seconds as soon as morning came. Whom should he choose? He thought of the most influential and best-known men of his acquaintance. His choice fell at last on the Marquis de la Tour-Noire and Colonel Bourdin—a nobleman and a sol-

dier. That would be just the thing. Their names would look well in the newspapers. He was thirsty, and drank three glasses of water, one after another; then he walked up and down again. If he showed himself brave, determined, prepared to face a duel in deadly earnest, his adversary would probably draw back and proffer excuses.

He picked up the card he had taken from his pocket and thrown on a table. He read it again, as he had already read it, first at a glance in the restaurant, and afterward on the way home in the light of the gas lamp: "Georges Lamil, 51 Rue Moncey." That was all.

He examined closely this collection of letters, which seemed to him mysterious, fraught with many meanings. Georges Lamil! Who was the man? What was his profession? Why had he stared so at the woman? Was it not monstrous that a stranger, an unknown, should thus all at once upset one's whole life, simply because it had pleased him to stare rudely at a woman? And the Viscount once more repeated aloud: "What a brute!"

Then he stood motionless, thinking, his eyes still fixed on the card. Anger rose in his heart against this scrap of paper—a resentful anger, mingled with a strange sense of uneasiness. It was a stupid business altogether! He took up a penknife which lay open within reach, and deliberately stuck it into the middle of the printed name, as if he were stabbing some one.

So he must fight! Should he choose swords or pistols?—for he considered himself the insulted party. With the sword he would risk less, but with the pistol there was some chance of his adversary backing out. A duel with swords is rarely fatal, since mutual prudence prevents the combatants from fighting close enough to each other for a point to enter very deep. With pistols he would seriously risk his life; but, on the other hand, he might come out of the affair with flying colors, and without a duel after all.

"I must be firm," he said. "The fellow will be afraid."

The sound of his own voice startled him, and he looked nervously round the room. He felt unstrung. He drank another glass of water, and then began undressing, preparatory to going to bed.

As soon as he was in bed he put out the light and shut his eyes.

"I have all day to-morrow," he reflected, "for setting my affairs in order. I must sleep now, in order to be calm when the time comes."

He was very warm in bed, but he could not succeed in losing consciousness. He tossed and turned, lay five minutes on his back, then changed to his left side, then rolled over to his right.

He was thirsty again, and rose to drink. Then a qualm seized him:

"Can it be possible that I am afraid?"

Why did his heart beat so uncontrollably at every

well-known sound in his room? When the clock was about to strike, the prefatory rattling of its spring made him start, and for several seconds he panted for breath, so unnerved was he.

He began to reason with himself on the possibility of such a thing:

"Could I by any chance be afraid?"

No, indeed; he could not be afraid, since he was resolved to proceed to the last extremity, since he was irrevocably determined to fight without flinching. Yet he was so perturbed in mind and body that he asked himself:

"Is it possible to be afraid in spite of oneself?"

This doubt, this fearful question, took possession of him. If an irresistible power, stronger than his own will, were to quell his courage, what would happen? He would certainly go to the place appointed; his will would force him that far. But supposing, when there, he were to tremble or faint? He thought of his social standing, his reputation, his name.

He suddenly determined to get up and look at himself in the mirror. He lighted his candle, and when he saw his face he hardly recognized it. He seemed to see before him a man he did not know. His eyes looked disproportionately large, and he was very pale.

He remained standing before the mirror. He put out his tongue, as if to examine the state of his health, and suddenly the thought flashed into his mind:

"At this time the day after to-morrow I may be dead."

And his heart throbbed painfully.

"At this time the day after to-morrow I may be dead. This person in front of me, this 'I' whom I see in the glass, will perhaps be no more. What! Here I am, I look at myself, I feel myself to be alive—and yet in twenty-four hours I may be lying on that bed, with closed eyes, dead, cold, inanimate."

He turned round, and could see himself distinctly, lying on his back on the couch he had just quitted. He had the drawn face and the limp hands of death.

Then he became afraid of his bed, and to avoid seeing it went to his smoking-room. He mechanically took a cigar, lighted it, and began walking to and fro. He was cold; he took a step toward the bell, to wake his valet, but stopped with hand raised toward the bell-rope.

"He would see that I am afraid!"

Instead of ringing he made a fire himself. His hands quivered nervously as they touched various objects. His head grew dizzy, his thoughts confused, disjointed, painful; a numbness seized his spirit, as if he had been drinking.

And all the time he kept on saying:

"What shall I do? What will become of me?"

His whole body trembled spasmodically; he rose, and, going to the window, drew back the curtains.

The day—a summer day—was breaking. The pink sky cast a glow on the city, its roofs, and its walls. A flush of light enveloped the awakened world, like a caress from the rising sun, and the glimmer of dawn kindled new hope in the breast of the Viscount. What a fool he was to let himself succumb to fear before anything was decided—before his seconds had interviewed those of Georges Lamil, before he even knew whether he would have to fight or not!

He made his toilet, dressed, and left the house with a firm step.

He repeated as he went:

"I must be firm—very firm. I must show that I am not afraid."

His seconds, the Marquis and the Colonel, placed themselves at his disposal, and, having shaken him warmly by the hand, began to discuss details.

"You want a serious duel?" asked the Colonel.

"Yes—quite serious," replied the Viscount.

"You insist on pistols?" put in the Marquis.

"Yes."

"Do you leave all the other arrangements in our hands?"

With a dry, jerky voice the Viscount answered:

"Twenty paces—at a given signal—the arm to be raised, not lowered—shots to be exchanged until one or the other is seriously wounded."

"Excellent conditions," declared the Colonel in a satisfied tone. "You are a good shot; all the chances are in your favor."

They parted. The Viscount returned home to wait for them. His agitation, only temporarily allayed, now increased momentarily. He felt, in arms, legs, and chest, a sort of trembling—a continuous vibration; he could not remain quiet, either sitting or standing. His mouth was parched, and he made every now and then a clicking movement of the tongue, as if to detach it from his palate.

He attempted to take luncheon, but could not eat. Then it occurred to him to seek courage in drink, and he sent for a decanter of rum, of which he swallowed, one after another, six small glasses.

A burning warmth, followed by a deadening of the mental faculties, ensued. He said to himself:

"I know how to manage. Now it will be all right!"

But at the end of an hour he had emptied the decanter, and his agitation was worse than ever. A mad longing possessed him to throw himself on the ground, to bite, to scream. Night fell.

A ring at the bell so unnerved him that he had not the strength to rise to receive his seconds.

He dared not even speak to them, wish them good day, utter a single word, lest his changed voice should betray him.

"All is arranged as you wished," said the Colonel. "Your adversary claimed at first the privileges of the offended party; but he yielded almost at once, and accepted your conditions. His seconds are two military men."

"Thank you," said the Viscount.

The Marquis added:

"Please excuse us if we do not stay now, for we have many things to look after yet. We shall want a reliable doctor, since the duel is not to end until a serious wound has been inflicted; and you know that bullets are not to be trifled with. We must select a spot near some house to which the wounded person can be carried if necessary. In fact, the arrangements will take us another two or three hours at least."

The Viscount articulated for the second time:

"Thank you."

"You are all right?" asked the Colonel. "Quite calm?"

"Perfectly calm, thank you."

The two men withdrew.

When he was once more alone he felt as if he should go mad. His servant having lighted the lamps, he sat down at his table to write some letters. When he had traced at the top of a sheet of paper the words: "This is my last will and testament," he started from his seat, feeling himself incapable of connected thought, of decision in regard to anything.

So he was about to fight! He could no longer avoid it. What, then, possessed him? He wished to fight, he was fully determined to fight, and yet, in spite of all his mental effort, in spite of the exertion of all his will power, he felt that he could not

even preserve the strength necessary to carry him through the ordeal. He tried to conjure up a picture of the duel, his own attitude, and that of his enemy.

Now and then his teeth chattered audibly. He thought he would read, and took down Châteauvillard's *Rules of Duelling*. Then he said:

"Is the other man practised in the use of the pistol? Is he well known? How can I find out?"

He remembered Baron de Vaux's book on marksmen, and searched it from end to end. Georges Lamil was not mentioned. And yet, if he were not an adept, would he have accepted without demur such a dangerous weapon and such deadly conditions?

He opened a case of Gastinne Renettes which stood on a small table, and took from it a pistol. Next he stood in the correct attitude for firing, and raised his arm. But he was trembling from head to foot, and the weapon shook in his grasp.

Then he said to himself:

"It is impossible. I cannot fight like this."

He looked at the little black, death-spitting hole at the end of the pistol; he thought of dishonor, of the whispers at the clubs, the smiles in his friends' drawing-rooms, the contempt of women, the veiled sneers of the newspapers, the insults that would be showered on him by cowards.

He still looked at the weapon, and, raising the hammer, saw the glitter of the priming below it.

The pistol had been left loaded by some chance, some oversight. The discovery rejoiced him, he knew not why.

If he did not maintain, in presence of his opponent, the steadfast bearing which was so necessary to his honor, he would be ruined forever. He would be branded, stigmatized as a coward, hounded out of society! And he felt, he knew, that he could not maintain that calm, unmoved demeanor. And yet he was brave, since—the thought that followed was not even rounded to a finish in his mind; but, opening his mouth wide, he suddenly plunged the barrel of the pistol as far back as his throat, and pressed the trigger.

When the valet, alarmed at the sound of the shot, rushed into the room he found his master lying dead upon his back. A spurt of blood had splashed the white paper on the table, and had made a great crimson stain beneath the words:

"This is my last will and testament."

MOUNT OLIVET

WHEN the men of the small port of Garandou, in the Bay of Pisca, between Marseilles and Toulon, in Provence, saw the boat of the Abbé Vilbois returning from his fishing expedition, they came to the beach to assist him.

The abbé was alone in it, and he was rowing like a true mariner, with rare energy, in spite of his fifty-eight years. With his sleeves rolled up over his muscular arms, his cassock drawn up between his knees, and some buttons open over his breast, his three-cornered hat on the bench beside him, and wearing a white bell-shaped hat, he looked like a substantial ecclesiastic of the southern countries, made for adventures rather than for saying mass.

From time to time he looked behind and gauged the point of landing, and then continued to row, with strong, rhythmic and methodic strokes, to demonstrate once again to these poor sailors of the Midi how the men from the North swim.

The boat, urged forward by his oars, finally touched the sand and glided over it as if to trace a line with its keel; then it stopped short, and the

five men who were watching the *curé,* approached, evidently pleased to see him back.

"Well, Monsieur le curé, have you had good luck?" asked one with a strong Provençal accent.

The Abbé Vilbois drew in his oars, took off his bell-shaped hat and put on his three-cornered one, unrolled his sleeves, buttoned his cassock, and having thus resumed his wonted bearing and appearance, he replied proudly:

"Yes, very good, three red-snappers, two eels and some sunfish."

The five fishermen, hanging over the edge of the boat, critically examined the dead fish, the fat snappers, the flat-headed eels, hideous sea-serpents, and the violet sunfish, with zigzag golden and orange-colored stripes.

"I will carry them to your house, Monsieur le curé," said one of the men.

"Thank you, my good fellow," replied the *curé.*

After shaking them all by the hand, the *curé* set out for his home, followed by one of the men and leaving the others to look after his boat.

He walked with a long, slow stride, with an air of strength and dignity. Being still heated with the exertion of rowing, he now and again took off his hat when passing under the light shadow of the olive trees, exposing to the warm evening air, which was slightly fanned by a breeze from the sea, his square forehead framed in by his straight, close-cut hair, the forehead of an officer rather than of a

priest. The village in front of them was on an elevation in the middle of a large valley sloping down to the sea.

It was an evening in July. The brilliant sun had almost reached the serried summits of the distant hills, and the lengthening shadow of the ecclesiastic, enveloped in dust, fell upon the white road, while the immense three-cornered hat appeared like a black spot in the neighboring field, climbing from olive tree to olive tree and then jumping down on the ground between the trees.

The abbé's feet raised a cloud of fine dust, that impalpable flour which covers in summer all the roads in Provence. It whirled about his cassock, covering it around the bottom with a strip of gray. He was now striding along, with his hands in his pockets, and the slow, strong step of a mountaineer. His calm eyes looked at his village, where he had been *curé* for twenty years. This village, chosen by him, had been obtained as an especial favor, and he hoped to die there. His church rose above the houses clustered around it. Its two towers of brown stone, square and irregular, which reared their silhouettes out of this lovely valley of the Midi, seemed more like the defenses of a strong castle than the belfries of a sacred building.

The abbé was content because he had caught three red-snappers, two eels, and five sunfish.

He would have this new little triumph before his

parishioners, who respected him perhaps because in spite of his age he was the best developed man in that country. These innocent little vanities were his greatest pleasure. He could cut the stems of flowers with his pistol; he sometimes fenced with his neighbor, the tobacco-dealer, an ex-army officer, and he swam better than any other person on the coast.

He had been a man of the world, very well known in his time, and very elegant, the Baron de Vilbois, who had entered the priesthood at the age of thirty-two, because of an unfortunate love affair.

He was the scion of an old family of Picardy, Royalist and religious, whose male members for several centuries had entered the army, official life, or the priesthood, and he at first contemplated taking holy orders. But at the instance of his father he decided to go to Paris, study law, and then seek some good appointment in the Palais.

But before he had completed his course his father died of pneumonia, and his mother soon followed, overcome with grief. Coming thus into possession of a great fortune, he renounced all his ideas of a career, satisfied with living as a man of wealth.

But one day he fell in love with a young actress, whom he had met at a friend's house; she was a very young pupil of the Conservatory, and had made a brilliant début at the Odéon.

He loved her with all the violence and passion of a man born to believe in absolute ideas. He fell in

love with her by seeing her in the rôle in which she achieved a startling success on her first appearance.

She was pretty, naturally perverse, with the naïve air of a child, which he called her angelic air. She obtained absolute control of him, turning him into one of those delicious slaves, one of those madmen in ecstasy, whom a woman's glance or a woman's skirt will fling upon the stake of mortal passion. He made her his mistress, took her from the stage, and loved her for four years with an ever increasing ardor. And he would have married her in the end, in spite of his name and the traditions of honor of his family, had he not discovered that for a long time she had been deceiving him with the friend who had introduced him to her.

This discovery was all the more terrible as she was *enceinte*, and he was only waiting for the birth of the child in order to marry her.

When he held the proofs in his hand, letters accidentally found in a drawer, he reproached her with her infidelity, her perfidy, and her ignorance, with all the brutality of the semi-barbarian that he was.

But she, a child of the streets, as impudent as she was shameless, sure of the other one as she had been of this one, and fearless like all the women of the people, who mount upon the barricades in mere foolhardiness, braved and insulted him; and as he was raising his hand against her, she showed him her figure. He stopped short, turning

pale at the thought that a descendant of his was there, in that sullied flesh, in that vile body, in that impure creature—yes, his own child. At that thought he threw himself upon her, to crush them both, to wipe out the double shame. She was afraid, and believing herself lost, as she was rolling on the floor under his fist, and seeing his raised foot ready to trample upon her body wherein the human embryo was living, she cried, with hands outstretched to ward off the blows:

"Don't kill me! It is not yours—it belongs to him!"

He started back, so dumbfounded that his fury was suspended, like his fist, and he stammered:

"You—you say——"

And she, mad with fear before the menace of death in the eyes and the terrifying gesture of the man, repeated:

"It is not yours, it belongs to him."

"The child?" he muttered, through clenched teeth.

"Yes."

"You lie!"

And again he moved, with the gesture of a man about to crush someone, while his mistress, having risen to her feet, attempted to draw away from him, stammering:

"I tell you that it belongs to him. If it were yours, should I not have had it long ago?"

This argument struck him as true. He felt con-

vinced, in one of those instantaneous flashes of thought wherein all the threads of reasoning appear at the same time, with an illuminating clarity, precise, irrefutable, conclusive, irresistible, and he was sure that he was not the father of this miserable beggar's child, and, relieved, delivered, almost calmed, of a sudden, he decided not to kill this infamous creature.

He said to her in a somewhat calmer voice:

"Get up, go away, and let me never see you again."

She went away. And he never saw her again.

He also went away, going toward the Midi, toward the sun, and stopped in a village in the middle of a valley, on the shore of the Mediterranean. An inn looking out upon the sea attracted him, and he took a room there. For eighteen months he stayed there in complete isolation, given over to sorrow and despair. He lived there with the devouring memories of the false woman, dwelling on her unforgetable charm and witcheries, and longing for her presence and her caresses.

He roamed the valley of Provence in the sunlight checkered with the gray foliage of the olives, his head sick with an obsession.

Then the pious ideas and the tempered ardor of his early faith stole softly into his heart in this sorrowful solitude. Religion, which formerly had appeared to him as a refuge from the life unknown, now seemed to him like a refuge from the life of

treachery and torture. He had retained the habit of prayer. He now clung to it in his grief, and he often went at nightfall to kneel in the dark church, where only one lamp was burning at the end of the choir, the sacred guardian of the sanctuary, the symbol of the Divine presence.

He confided his trouble to this God, his God, telling Him his whole misery. He asked for God's counsel, pity, help, protection, and consolation, and every day he prayed more fervently.

His wounded heart remained open and palpitating; and little by little, consequent upon his prayers, his hermit life, with the habits of piety always increasing, and giving himself up to this secret communication of devout souls with the Savior, who consoles and draws to Him the miserable ones of earth, the mystic love of God entered into him and overcame the other love.

Then he returned to his first project and decided to offer to the Church a broken life, which he had not given to her while it was virgin.

He became a priest. Through his family connections, he succeeded in obtaining the charge of the Provençal village where chance had led him. He gave a large part of his fortune to charitable institutions, retaining only enough to live a useful life until his death, in aiding the poor, and he retired into the calm existence of practical piety and devotion to his fellow men.

He made a good priest, but with limited out-

look, being a kind of religious guide with the temperament of a soldier who by main force would lead erring humanity back into the narrow way—blind humanity lost in this forest of life where all our instincts, our tastes, our desires, only lead us astray. But much of the man of olden days remained alive in him. He still loved violent exercise, and he detested all women with the fear of a child before a mysterious danger.

The sailor who was following the priest felt a truly southern desire to talk. Finally he summoned up courage and said:

"Then you are comfortable in your lodge?"

This lodge was one of those diminutive houses where the people of the towns and villages of the Provence go to get fresh air. The abbé had rented this house, which stood in a field, about five minutes' walk from his parsonage; the latter was too small and shut-up, close by the church, in the middle of the village.

He did not live in this country house regularly, not even in summer, but spent a few days there from time to time, to live among the greenery and to practise pistol-shooting.

"Yes," he replied, "I am very comfortable there."

The low house rose out of the midst of the trees; it was painted pink, and seemed all checkered and cut up by the leaves and branches of olive trees, It seemed to have grown there like a mushroom.

A tall woman busied herself in front of the door,

setting a small table for dinner. Slowly and deliberately she brought out, one piece at a time, a cover, a plate, a napkin, a piece of bread, a glass. She wore the little bonnet of the women of Arles, a cone made of black silk or velvet and decorated with a white *champignon*.

When the abbé came within hailing distance, he called to her:

"Eh, Marguerite?"

She stopped short, looked around, and replied:

"Is that you, Monsieur le curé?"

"Yes, I bring you a good catch, and you will at once grill a sunfish for me with butter, nothing but butter."

The woman, coming to meet the men, critically examined the fish held by the sailor.

"But we already have a chicken with rice," she said.

"That's too bad; fish a day old is never so good as fish fresh from the water. But I will treat myself to a little feast, which does not happen very often; and besides, the catch is not very great."

The woman took the fish, and as she turned to go she said:

"A man has been here three times to see you, Monsieur le curé."

"A man? What kind of man?" he asked indifferently.

"A man whose person is not a recommendation."

"What, a beggar?"

"Perhaps; I don't say he is not. I should rather call him a *maoufatan.*"

The abbé began to laugh on hearing this Provençal word, which means felon or tramp, for he knew the timid disposition of Marguerite, who could not stay at the lodge without imagining all day, and especially at night, that they would be assassinated.

He gave a few sous to the sailor, who went away, when Marguerite called out to him from the kitchen, where she was scraping the fish, whose scales, somewhat colored with blood, flew up like tiny bits of silver:

"There he is!"

The abbé turned toward the road, where he saw a man who, at that distance, appeared to be very ill clad, and who was coming slowly toward the house. The abbé stood awaiting him, smiling still at the fear of his servant, and thinking: "Indeed, I think that she is right; he really looks like a *maoufatan.*"

The stranger approached slowly, with his hands in his pockets. He was young, and had a blond, curly beard; stray locks of hair hung down beneath his soft gray felt hat, which was so dirty and shapeless that it would have been impossible to guess its original color and form. He wore a long, dark-brown overcoat, trousers that were frayed around the ankles, and linen shoes with soft soles that gave him a noiseless, disquieting step, the silent step of the tramp.

A few feet from the priest he took off his hat with a somewhat theatrical air, disclosing a bald head, and a withered, sensual, but shapely face, with the marks of fatigue or of precocious debauchery, for he was surely not more than twenty-five years old.

The priest also took off his hat, for he felt that this was not an ordinary vagabond, an unemployed working-man or a jail-bird roaming around between two terms of prison, and hardly knowing any other language than the mysterious slang of the cells.

"Good day, Monsieur le curé," said the man.

"I greet you," replied the *curé* simply, not caring to address this suspicious and ragged pedestrian as monsieur. They looked steadily at each other, and in the face of this tramp the Abbé Vilbois felt uneasy and moved as before an unknown enemy, overcome by one of those strange attacks of fear that make flesh and blood shiver.

Finally the tramp said, "Well, do you recognize me?"

"I? Not at all; I don't know you," replied the priest, greatly astonished.

"Ah, you don't know me. Look at me more closely."

"Look at you as I will, I never have seen you."

"That is true," said the tramp ironically, "but I will show you someone whom you know better."

He put on his hat and unbuttoned his overcoat,

showing his naked breast. A red belt, twisted around his thin body, held his trousers above his hips.

He took an envelope out of his pocket, one of those indescribable envelopes covered with all sorts of spots, one of those envelopes in which tramps are wont to keep all their papers, genuine or false, stolen or their own, the precious protectors of their liberty against any police they may meet. Out of it he drew a photograph, one of those letter-size cardboards as they were made formerly, yellow, timeworn, having rubbed against the flesh of this man and being tarnished with the heat of his body.

And lifting it to his face, he asked: "Do you know him?"

The abbé stepped nearer to see better, then stood still, pale and startled, for it was his own likeness, made for Her, in the long-ago past of his days of love.

He said nothing, not understanding.

"Do you know him?" the vagabond repeated.

"Yes, I do," stammered the priest.

"Who is it?"

"It is I."

"It is really you?"

"Why, yes."

"Well, then look at both of us now, at your likeness and at me."

The unhappy man had already perceived that these two faces, the one of the photograph and the

one who was laughing beside it, resembled each other like two brothers; but still he did not understand, and he stammered:

"Well, what do you want of me?"

"What do I want? I want first of all that you should recognize me," the beggar said in a malicious tone.

"But who are you?"

"Who am I? Ask anyone on the road, ask your servant, let us go and ask the Mayor of this town, if you like, showing him this; and he will laugh, I tell you. Ah, you don't want to recognize me as your son, papa *curé?*"

Then the old man, raising his arms in a Biblical attitude of despair, groaned:

"That is not true."

The young man came quite close to him, face-to-face.

"Ah, it is not true? Ah, abbé, you must stop lying, do you hear?"

He looked threatening, standing there with his fists closed, and he spoke with such a violent tone of conviction that the priest, drawing back, asked himself which of the two was mistaken at this moment.

Yet he affirmed once again:

"I never have had any child."

"And no mistress, perhaps," retorted the tramp.

The old man answered resolutely, with the one word "Yes," the proud avowal of his past.

"And this mistress was not with child when you drove her away?"

Then suddenly the ancient anger, stifled twenty-five years before—no, not stifled, but ripened within the lover's heart—broke through the bounds of faith, of resigned devotion, of the renunciation of all that he had set upon her, and he cried:

"I drove her away because she had deceived me and bore within her the child of another, without which fact I should have killed her, and you with her."

The young man hesitated, surprised in turn by the genuine anger of the *curé;* then he said more softly:

"Who told you that it was the child of another?"

"Why, she—she herself, in braving me."

Then the vagabond, not heeding this affirmation, said with the indifferent tone of a young ruffian who judges of a case:

"Oh, well, mamma made a mistake, laughing at you."

"And who told you that you were my son?" asked the abbé, regaining his self-control, after his outburst of fury.

"Why, she, on her deathbed, Monsieur le curé. And then this."

And he held the little photograph under the eyes of the priest.

The old man took it, and, torn with anguish, he long and deliberately compared this passing stranger

and his own former self and no longer doubted that it was his son.

His heart felt compressed, and an inexpressible, frightfully painful feeling came over him, like remorse for a crime. Understanding a little, and divining the rest, he again beheld the brutal scene of that separation. It was to save her life from the fury of the outraged man, that the deceitful and perfidious woman had flung that lie at him. The lie had succeeded, and a son by him had been born, had grown up, and had become this low vagabond, who smelled of vice as a goat smells of the beast.

"Will you walk with me a little, that we may explain things better?"

"That's exactly what I came here for," said the other with a grin.

They went together, side by side, through the grove of olives. The sun was gone. The abbé shivered, and suddenly raising his eyes with the movement habitual to the officiant, he saw around him the small grayish foliage of the holy tree which had sheltered beneath its frail shadow the greatest sorrow, the one single feebleness of the Christ.

A prayer rose to his lips, short and full of despair, uttered with that interior voice which does not pass beyond the mouth, and with which the believers implore the Saviour: "O God, help me!"

Then, turning to his son:

"You say that your mother is dead?"

A new sorrow awoke within him in uttering these

words, and chilled his heart, the misery of the flesh of the man who never has forgotten, and a cruel echo of the torture he had suffered, but still more, perhaps, since she was dead, a trembling remembrance of that short and delirious joy of youth of which nothing now remained but the wound in his memory.

"Yes, Monsieur le curé, my mother is dead," replied the young man.

"Long ago?"

"Yes, three years."

Then a new doubt came over the priest.

"Why did you not come sooner to find me?"

The other one hesitated.

"I could not. There were things to keep me. Pardon me for interrupting these confidences, of which I will tell you more later, with as many details as you wish, but I will say now that I have eaten nothing since yesterday morning."

A shock of pity came over the old man, and suddenly holding out his hands, he said, "Oh, my poor child!"

The young man grasped those large outstretched hands, which closed around his more slender fingers, which were moist and feverish. And he said with the suavity which he had shown throughout:

"Good! I really am beginning to think that we shall understand each other."

"Come in to dinner," said the *curé,* going toward the house.

He suddenly thought, with a little, instinctive, confused, bizarre sort of joy, of the fine fish he had caught, which, together with the chicken and rice, would make a good dinner for this wretched child.

The Arlesian woman, restless and impatient, was waiting at the door.

"Marguerite," cried the abbé, "take the table into the parlor, and set two plates, quick, quick."

The servant stood dumbfounded at the thought that her master would dine with this felon. Then the Abbé Vilbois began himself to clear the table and take the cover set for him into the only room on the ground floor.

Five minutes later he was sitting opposite the vagabond before a tureen full of cabbage soup, which sent up a thin vapor of hot steam between their faces.

When the plates were served the tramp began to eat his soup greedily with great spoonfuls. The abbé was no longer hungry, and merely inhaled slowly the savory odor of the cabbage soup, leaving his bread on his plate.

"What is your name?" he asked suddenly.

The man laughed, satisfied with appeasing his hunger.

"Unknown father," he said, "no other name than that of my mother, which you have probably not yet forgotten. But, instead, I have two given names, which, by the way, are not worth much: Philippe-Auguste."

The abbé, turning pale, asked, with a lump in his throat:

"Why did they give you those names?"

The vagabond shrugged.

"You may guess. After leaving you, mamma wished to make your rival believe that I was his child, and he did think so until I was about fifteen years old. But then I began to look too much like you, and the wretch denied me. They had given me his two names, Philippe-Auguste; and if I had had the good luck not to resemble anyone, or to be merely the son of a third rascal who never had shown up, I should now be called the Vicomte Philippe-Auguste de Pravallon, the tardily acknowledged son of the Viscount of the same name, Senator. I have baptized myself 'Lack-luck.'"

"How did you know all this?"

"Because there were explanations before me, *parbleu!* and violent ones, too. It is these things that make one know life."

Something more painful and griping than anything he had felt and suffered for the last half hour oppressed the priest. It was a choking sensation, which came and grew upon him and would finally kill him, and it was not so much what he heard as the manner of speech and the sensual face of the young ruffian. He felt that between him and his son yawned a ditch of moral filth, which is a mortal poison to some souls. So this was his son? He could not bring himself to believe it. He wished

to have the full proofs, to learn all, hear all, suffer all. Again he thought of the olives that surrounded his lodge and again he murmured: "O God, help me!"

Philippe-Auguste had finished his soup.

"Is there nothing more to eat, Abbé?"

The kitchen being outside of the house, in an adjoining building, where Marguerite could not hear his voice, the priest was wont to summon her by means of blows on a Chinese gong hung near the wall behind him.

Accordingly he took the hammer and struck this gong several times. The sound, slight at first, increased, became more pronounced, vibrant, sharp, still more sharp, an ear-splitting, horrible plaint of the struck metal.

The servant appeared, with set face, looking furiously at the *maoufatan,* as if guessing, with an instinct like that of a faithful dog, the drama unfolding around her master. She held in her hand the grilled fish, which sent up the savory odor of melted butter. The abbé split open the fish with a spoon, and, offering the *filet* of the back to the child of his youth, he said, with a remnant of pride remaining through his sorrow:

"I caught it myself a while ago."

Marguerite was still in the room.

"Bring wine, some good white wine of the Corsican Cape," he said to her.

She made a gesture, as if in revolt, and he had to

repeat with an air of severity: "Go! two bottles." For when he offered wine to anyone, which happened rarely, he always treated himself to a full bottle.

Philippe-Auguste murmured radiantly:

"Fine! A good idea! It is a long time since I have eaten like this."

The servant came back in two minutes. But they seemed an eternity to the abbé, who was sitting on coals, devoured with the desire to know all.

The bottles were uncorked, but the woman still stood there, with her eyes on the strange man.

"Leave us," said the *curé*.

She pretended not to hear, and he repeated severely, "I have told you to leave us alone."

Then she went.

Philippe-Auguste ate the fish voraciously; and his father looked at him, more and more surprised and saddened to see so much that was low in the face that resembled him so strongly. The small bits that the abbé put into his mouth, stuck there, for he could not swallow anything; and he chewed these mouthfuls, searching among all the questions that came to his mind, the one to which he wanted the quickest answer. Finally he murmured:

"Of what did she die?"

"Of lung trouble."

"Was she ill a long time?"

"About eighteen months."

"How did she get it?"

"No one knows."

They were silent. The abbé sat lost in thought. So many things that he wanted to know came to him, for he had heard nothing about her since the day of the rupture, since the day when he had almost killed her. True, he had not wished to know anything, for he had resolutely flung her and the days of his happiness into the grave of oblivion; but now that she was dead, the desire to know suddenly arose in him, a jealous desire, almost a lover's desire.

"She was not alone?" he resumed.

"No, she was always living with him."

"With him—with Pravallon?" asked the old man startled.

"Why, yes."

And the man who had been betrayed realized that this same woman who had deceived him had lived more than thirty years with his rival. Almost in spite of himself he stammered:

"Were they happy together?"

"Why, yes, with up and downs," said the young man sneeringly. "They would have got on together famously without me, but I always spoiled everything."

"How and why?" asked the priest.

"I have already told you. Because he thought that I was his son, up to the time I was fifteen years old. But he was not a fool, this old one; he himself discovered the resemblance, and then there

were scenes. I was listening at the keyholes. He accused mamma of having got him into a mess. 'Is it my fault?' she replied. 'You knew very well, when you took me, that I was the mistress of the other one. You were 'the other one.' "

"Then they sometimes talked of me?"

"Yes, but they never mentioned you by name before me, except at the very last, when mamma felt that her end had come. Still, they were distrustful."

"And you—you found out early in life that your mother was living irregularly?"

"*Parbleu,* I'm not simple, and I never have been. One soon guesses at those things, when one begins to know life."

Philippe-Auguste poured himself glass after glass. His eyes became brilliant, for his long fast now quickly sent the wine to his head.

The priest noticed it; he was about to stop him, then it occurred to him that if the young man became drunk he might talk more freely and unthinkingly; and so, taking up the bottle, the abbé again filled his glass.

Marguerite brought the chicken with rice. After placing it on the table, she again fixed her eyes upon the tramp, and said to her master with an air of indignation:

"But see how dirty he is, Monsieur le curé."

"Leave us alone, and go out," the priest replied.

She went out, slamming the door.

"What did your mother say about me?" asked the priest.

"Why, what one usually says of a man whom one has left. That you were not the right kind, stupid for a woman to live with, and that you would have made life hard for her with your ideas."

"Did she say that often?"

"Yes; sometimes with subterfuges, so that I should not understand, but I guessed it all."

"And how were you treated in this house?"

"I? Very well at first, and then very badly. When mamma saw that I was spoiling things for her, she put me out."

"How so?"

"How so? Simple enough. When I was about sixteen I did some foolish tricks, and those two nice parents put me into a reformatory, to get rid of me."

Putting his elbows on the table, he rested his cheeks on his hands, and, entirely drunk now, his mind befuddled with the wine, he was suddenly seized with that irresistible desire to talk about himself which turns drunkards into fantastic braggarts.

He smiled sweetly, with a feminine, perverse grace on his lips, which the priest recognized. He not only recognized it, but he felt it, hateful and caressing, that grace which had formerly conquered and then betrayed him. At this moment the child resembled its mother the most, not in feature, but in the captivating and false eye, and especially in

the seduction of the deceitful smile, which seemed to open the mouth to all the infamies within.

"Ah, ah, ah, but I have led a life!" began Philippe-Auguste, "after those days in the reformatory, a full kind of life, which a great novelist would pay dear to know. Really, Dumas *père,* with his *Monte Cristo,* has not invented so many situations as I have found myself in."

He stopped, looking grave like a philosopher lost in thought, then he continued slowly:

"If you want to have a boy turn out well, you must never send him to a reformatory, because of the acquaintances he will make there. Mine was a good one, but it turned out badly. As I was walking on the turnpike near the ford of Faloc, one evening with three comrades, all four of us a little intoxicated, I met a carriage, in which the driver and all his family were sleeping; they were people from Martinon, who were returning from a dinner in town. I took the horse by the bridle, made it go upon the raft used as a ferry, and pushed the raft into the river. The noise this made woke up the driver, who, not seeing clearly, whipped up the horse, which jumped into the water with the carriage. All were drowned. My comrades told on me, though they laughed loudly at first on seeing me play this trick. We really didn't think it would turn out so badly. We simply thought to give the people a bath, and laugh at them.

"After that I did worse things, to get even for

the punishment I got for that one. I really did not deserve it, but it is not worth while to tell you all this. I will merely tell my last escapade, because you will like that one, I'm sure. I have revenged you, papa!"

The abbé was looking at his son with terrified eyes; he was no longer eating.

As Philippe-Auguste was about to continue, the priest said:

"Not now—later."

Turning around, he struck the Chinese gong, which emitted its strident noise.

Marguerite appeared at once, and her master said:

"Bring in the lamp and whatever else you have to put on the table, and then you will not come in again until I strike the gong."

He said this in such a harsh tone that she hung her head, frightened and obedient, and went out. She soon came in again, with a white porcelain lamp with a green shade; she placed this on the table, together with a large piece of cheese and some fruit, and then went out again.

"Now I will hear what you have to say," said the abbé resolutely.

Philippe-Auguste calmly finished his dessert and his wine. The second bottle was nearly empty, although the *curé* had not touched it.

The young man said, stammering, his mouth smeared with food and dirt:

"The last one, here it is. This is a strong one.

I had come back to the house; and I stayed there in spite of them—because—because they were afraid of me—afraid of me! Ah, one must not bore me, I'm capable of anything when I am bored. You know—they were living together, and yet not together. He had two establishments, one as a senator and one as a lover. But he lived with mamma much more than in his own home, for he could no longer live without her. Ah, she was a clever one, and a strong one—was mamma. She knew how to keep a man. She had taken possession of him body and soul, and she kept him to the end. Men are such fools! Well, I had come home, and I lorded it over them by making them afraid of me. I am a sly one, if need be, and as for malice, tricks, and even fisticuffs, I'm not afraid of any one. Then mamma got sick, and he installed her in a fine country house near Meulan, in the middle of a park as large as a forest. This lasted about eighteen months, as I have told you. Then we saw the end approaching. He came every day from Paris, and he was filled with grief, yes, real grief.

"One morning they had been talking for more than an hour, and I was wondering what they could be chattering about for such a time, when finally they called me in, and mamma said to me:

" 'I am about to die, and there is something that I wish to reveal to you, in spite of the advice of the Comte'—she always called him 'Comte' in speaking of him. 'It is the name of your father, who is still living.'

"I had asked her this name more than a hundred times—more than a hundred times—the name of my father—more than a hundred times—and she had always refused to tell me. I even think that one day I boxed her ears, to make her talk, but she would not. Then, to get rid of me, she told me that you had died, without a sou, that you did not amount to much, it was merely a mistake of her youth, a mere girl's fancy. She told me this so convincingly that I really believed you were dead.

"Accordingly she said to me:

" 'This is your father's name.'

"The other one, who was sitting in an arm-chair, repeated three times, like this: 'You make a mistake, you make a mistake, you make a mistake, Rosette.'

"Mamma sat up in her bed. I still see her, with her red cheeks and her brilliant eyes, for she really loved me, all the same, and she said to him: 'Then you do something for him, Philippe.'

"In speaking to him, she addressed him as Philippe, and she called me Auguste.

"He began to laugh like a crazy man.

" 'For that love-child, that good-for-nothing, that jail-bird, that—that—that——'

"And he hurled epithets at me, as if he never had done anything else in his life.

"I was about to get angry, when mamma stopped me, saying to him:

" 'Then you want him to die of hunger, as I have nothing myself.'

"He replied, undisturbed:

" 'Rosette, I have given you thirty-six thousand francs a year for thirty years, which makes more than a million. You have lived with me as a rich woman, a well-beloved woman, and, I dare say, a happy woman. I owe nothing to this beggar, who has spoiled our last years together, and he shall have nothing from me. It is useless to insist upon it. Give him the name of the other, if you wish to do so. I am sorry, but I wash my hands.'

"Then mamma turned toward me. 'Good!' I said to myself, 'Now I shall find my real father. If he has money, I am saved.'

"She continued:

" 'Your father, the Baron de Vilbois, is now the Abbé Vilbois, *curé* of Garandou near Toulon. He was my lover when I left him for this one.'

"And then she told me everything. But women, you know, never tell the truth."

He was grinning, unconsciously, revealing all his foulness. He was still drinking, and with face still hilarious, he continued:

"Mamma died two days later—two days. We followed her to the cemetery—he and I—and three servants—that was all. He cried like a cow—we were close together—one might have said, father and son.

"Then we came back to the house. Only we two. I said to myself: 'Now I must skip, without a sou.' I had exactly fifty francs. What could I do now to get even?

" 'I wish to speak to you,' he said to me.

"I followed him to the study. He sat down before his table and, whining in his tears, he said he would not treat me as badly as he had maintained before mamma; he also asked me not to bore you. But that concerns us two, you and me. He offered me a thousand-franc bill! One thousand —one thousand—what can I do with one thousand francs, a man like me? I saw that he had more in the drawer, a large pile. The sight of that paper there made me feel like stabbing him. I held out my hand to take the one he wanted to give me, but instead of taking his alms I jumped upon him, threw him down on the floor, and choked him until his eyes stuck out of his head; then when he seemed ready to give up the ghost, I gagged him, bound him, undressed him, and then—ah, ah, ah! I have revenged you in a funny way!"

Philippe-Auguste coughed, choking with laughter, and on his ferocious and laughing lip the abbé again and again saw the quondam smile of the woman who made him lose his head.

"And then?" he asked.

"Then. Ah, ah, ah! There was a big fire in the fireplace—it was in December, in the cold—that she died—mamma—a large coal fire—I take the poker—I make it red hot—and then—I burn him two crosses on the back—eight, ten, I don't know how many; then I turn him over and make as many on his belly. Isn't that funny, eh, papa?

That way one formerly branded the galley-slaves. He twisted about like an eel—but I had gagged him well, he could not cry out. Then I took the bank-notes—twelve of them—which with my own made thirteen—this did not bring me luck. And I escaped, saying to the servants not to disturb Monsieur le Comte until dinner-time because he was sleeping.

"I thought he would say nothing, for fear of the scandal, since he is a senator. But I was mistaken. Four days later I was caught in a restaurant in Paris. I got three years in prison, and that's the reason that I did not come to see you before."

He was still drinking, his tongue so heavy that he could hardly speak.

"Now, papa—papa *curé*—isn't it funny to have a *curé* for a papa? Ah, ah, you must be good with *bibi,* because *bibi* is not the ordinary kind—and he has played a good—not so?—a good—joke on the old——"

The same anger which had formerly maddened the abbé before his treacherous mistress now filled him before this abominable man.

He who in the name of God had pardoned so many infamous secrets whispered into his ear in the confessional, felt pitiless on his own account, and he did not now call upon this helpful and merciful God, for he understood that no protection from heaven or earth can save here below those who are like this man.

All the ardor of his passionate heart and his violent temper, dormant in his episcopal office, awoke in a feeling of irresistible revolt against this wretch who was his son, against this resemblance to him, and also against the mother, the unworthy mother who had conceived him like unto her, and against fate, which riveted this beggar to his father's foot, like the ball of a galley-slave.

He saw everything at a flash, awakened by this shock out of his twenty-five years of pious sleep and tranquillity.

Suddenly convinced that he must talk loud in order to awaken fear in this criminal, and to terrify him at the outset, he said to him, with teeth clenched in fury, and no longer thinking of his intoxicated condition:

"Now that you have told me everything, listen to me. You will leave here tomorrow morning. You will live in a place that I will designate to you, and which you never will leave without my orders. I will pay you there a pension on which you can live, but a small one, as I have no money. If you disobey even once only, it is over, and you will have to do without me."

Although overcome with the wine, Philippe-Auguste understood the threat, and the criminal in him suddenly awoke.

"Ah, papa, don't threaten me," he spluttered. "You are a *curé*—I've got you there—and you'll come round—as the other did——"

The abbé jumped up, and in his muscles of old Hercules he felt an irresistible desire to take hold of this monster, to double him up like a wand, and show him that he must give way.

"Ah, take care, take care! I'm not afraid of anyone," he cried, shaking the table and pushing it against him.

The drunken fellow, losing his equilibrium, wavered in his chair. Feeling that he was about to fall, and that he was in the power of the priest, he reached out toward one of the knives on the table, with the gleam of the assassin in his eye. The Abbé Vilbois saw the movement, and he pushed the table so hard that his son toppled over on his back on the floor. The lamp upset and went out.

For a second there was a tinkling of broken glass in the darkness, then a sound as of the crawling of a soft body over the floor; then silence.

When the lamp broke, the sudden darkness that fell over them was so unexpected and deep that they were stupefied as by a frightful event. The drunken fellow, crouching against the wall, did not move; and the priest remained on his chair, plunged in the darkness which extinguished his anger. This somber veil cast over him arrested his passion and stilled the fury of his soul; and other ideas came to him, dark and gloomy as the obscurity.

There was silence as of a closed tomb, where nothing seemed to live or breathe. No noise came

in from the outside, no sound of a wagon in the distance, no barking of a dog, not even the slight breath of the wind outside or against the wall.

This lasted a long time, perhaps an hour. Then suddenly the gong sounded, struck by a single, sharp, hard blow, which was followed by the noise of a fall and of a chair thrown down.

Marguerite, who had been on the watch, came running in; but when she opened the door she started back, frightened at the impenetrable darkness.

"Monsieur le curé! Monsieur le curé!" she called, trembling, with beating heart and hesitating voice.

But no one answered, and nothing stirred.

"Great God! great God!" she said, "what have they done? What has happened?"

She did not dare to go in, nor to go back for a light, and she was seized with the mad desire to scream, to flee and save herself, though her legs trembled so that she was ready to fall.

"Monsieur le curé! Monsieur le curé!" she repeated, "it is me, Marguerite."

Then, in spite of her fear, the instinctive desire came over her to save her master, and an access of bravery, such as turns women at times into heroines, filled her soul with terrified audacity, and running to her kitchen she brought back her lamp.

She stopped on the sill. She saw, first, the vagabond stretched out by the wall, who was sleeping

or seemed to sleep; then the broken lamp; then, under the table, the two black feet and the black-stockinged legs of the Abbé Vilbois, who must have fallen on his back in hitting the gong.

Shaking with fright and with trembling hands, she repeated,

"My God! My God! what is this?"

As she was cautiously advancing, she slipped on something sticky and nearly fell down.

Then stooping down, she perceived on the red pavement a red liquid, flowing around her feet and rolling rapidly toward the door. She guessed that it was blood.

Frightened out of her wits, she fled, throwing away her lamp, so as to see nothing more, and rushed out into the field, toward the village. She flew along, screaming, bumping against the trees, her eyes bent upon the distant lights.

Her sharp voice rang through the night like the sinister cry of an owl, incessantly repeating: "The *maoufatan*—the *maoufatan!*"

As she reached the first houses, men came out and gathered round her; but she fought them without answering, for she had lost her head.

They finally understood that something had happened at the priest's house, and a posse armed themselves to run to his assistance.

The little pink lodge, in the middle of the field of olives, had sunk invisible and black into the still, dark night. Since the gleam in its one lighted

window had been extinguished like a closed eye, it was hidden in the shadow.

Soon lights came running toward it, through the trees. Long yellow beams fell over the burned grass, and in the unsteady clarity the twisted trunks of the olive trees seemed like monsters, or serpents of the inferno interlaced and twisted. Suddenly something white and vague rose out of the obscurity, and then the low, square wall of the little house became pink in the light of the lanterns. Some peasants were carrying them, escorting two policemen, revolvers in hand, the country watchman, the mayor, and Marguerite, almost fainting and supported by two men.

The men hesitated a moment before the open door, then the brigadier, seizing a lantern, entered, followed by the others.

The servant had spoken the truth. The blood now curdled, covered the flagging like a carpet. It had crept over to the vagabond, bathing one of his legs and one of his hands.

Father and son were sleeping, one, with his throat cut, the eternal sleep, and the other the sleep of the drunkard. The two policemen seized the latter, and he was handcuffed before he was fairly awake. He rubbed his eyes, stupefied and made brutish with the wine; and when he saw the corpse of the priest, he looked terrified, as if not comprehending anything.

"Why didn't he escape?" said the mayor.

"He was too drunk," said the brigadier.

And everybody was of the same opinion, for it did not occur to anyone that the Abbé Vilbois might have committed suicide.

THE FLIGHT OF YEARS

TWO friends were nearing the end of their dinner. Through the café windows they could see the Boulevard, crowded with people. They could feel the gentle breezes that are wafted over Paris on warm summer evenings, which make you feel like going out somewhere, you care not where, under the trees, and make you dream of moonlit rivers, of fireflies, and of larks.

One of the two, Henri Simon, heaved a deep sigh and said:

"Ah! I am growing old. It's sad. Formerly, on evenings like this, I felt full of life. Now, I only feel regrets. Life is short!"

He was about forty-five years old, very bald and growing stout.

The other, Pierre Carnier, a trifle older, but thin and lively, answered:

"Well, my boy, I have grown old without noticing it in the least. I have always been merry, healthy, vigorous, and all the rest. As one sees oneself in the mirror every day, one does not realize the work of age, for it is slow and regular, and it

modifies the countenance so gently that the changes are unnoticeable. It is for this reason alone that we do not die of sorrow after two or three years of excitement. For we cannot understand the alterations that time produces. To appreciate them one would have to remain six months without seeing one's own face—then, oh, what a shock!

"And the women, my friend, how I pity the poor beings! All their joy, all their power, all their life, lies in their beauty, which lasts ten years. As I said, I aged without noticing it; I thought myself practically a youth, when I was almost fifty. Not feeling the slightest infirmity, I went about, happy and peaceful. The revelation of my decline came to me in a simple and terrible manner, which overwhelmed me for almost six months—then I became resigned.

"Like all men, I have often been in love, but most especially once. I met her at the seashore, at Etretat, about twelve years ago, shortly after the war. Nothing is prettier than this beach during the morning bathing-hour. It is small, shaped like a horseshoe, framed by high, white cliffs, which are pierced by strange holes called the 'Portes,' one stretching out into the ocean like the leg of a giant, the other short and dumpy. The women gather on the narrow strip of sand in this frame of high rocks, which they make into a gorgeous garden of beautiful gowns. The sun beats down on the shores, on the multicolored parasols, on the

blue-green sea; and all is gay, delightful, smiling. You sit at the edge of the water and watch the bathers. The women come down, wrapped in long bathing-gowns, which they throw off daintily when they reach the foamy edge of the choppy waves; and they run into the water with a rapid little step, stopping from time to time for a delightful little thrill from the cold water, a short suffocation. Very few stand the test of the bath. There they can be judged, from the ankle to the throat. Especially when they leave the water are the defects revealed, although water is a powerful aid to flabby skin.

"The first time I saw this young woman in the water, I was delighted, entranced. She stood the test well. There are faces whose charms appeal to you at first glance and delight you instantly. You seem to have found the woman whom you were born to love. I had that feeling and that shock.

"I was introduced, and was soon smitten worse than I ever had been before. My heart longed for her. It is a terrible yet delightful thing thus to be dominated by a young woman. It is almost torture, and yet infinite delight. Her look, her smile, her hair fluttering in the wind, the little lines of her face, the slightest movement of her features, delighted me, upset me, entranced me. She had captured me body and soul, by her gestures, her manners, even by her clothes, which seemed to take

on a peculiar charm as soon as she wore them. I grew tender at the sight of her veil on some piece of furniture, or her gloves thrown on a chair. Her gowns seemed to me inimitable. Nobody had a hat like hers.

"She was married, but her husband came only on Saturday and left on Monday. I didn't concern myself about him, anyhow. I wasn't jealous of him, I don't know why; never did a creature seem to me to be of less importance in life, or attract my attention less than this man.

"But she! How I loved her! How beautiful, graceful and young she was! She was youth, elegance, freshness itself! Never before had I felt so strongly what a pretty, neat, distinguished, delicate, charming, graceful being woman is. Never before had I appreciated the seductive beauty in the curve of a cheek, the movement of a lip, the pinkness of an ear, the shape of that foolish organ called the nose.

"This lasted three months; then I left for America, overwhelmed with sadness. But her memory remained in me, persistent, triumphant. From far away I was as much hers as I had been when she was near me. Years passed by, and I did not forget her. The charming image of her person was ever before my eyes and in my heart. And my love remained true to her, a quiet tenderness still, something like the beloved memory of the most beautiful and most enchanting thing I had ever met.

"Twelve years are not much in a lifetime! One does not feel them slipping by. The years follow each other gently and quickly, slowly yet rapidly, each one is long and yet soon over! They add up so rapidly, they leave so few traces behind them, they disappear so completely, that, when one turns around to look back over bygone years, one sees nothing and yet does not understand how he happens to be so old. It seemed to me that hardly more than a few months separated me from that charming season on the sands of Etretat.

"Last spring, I was going to Maisons-Laffitte for dinner with some friends.

"Just as the train was leaving, a big, fat lady, escorted by four little girls, got into my car. I hardly looked at this mother hen, very big, very round, with a face as full as the moon and framed in an enormous, beribboned hat.

"She was panting, out of breath from having been forced to walk rapidly. The children began to chatter. I unfolded my paper and began to read.

"We had just passed Asnières, when my neighbor suddenly turned to me and said:

" 'Excuse me, sir, but are you not Monsieur Garnier?'

" 'Yes, Madame.'

"Then she began to laugh, the pleased laugh of a good woman, and yet it was sad.

" 'You do not appear to recognize me.'

"I hesitated. It seemed to me that I had seen

that face somewhere; but where? when? I answered:

"'Yes—and no. I certainly know you, and yet I cannot recall your name.'

"She blushed a little:

"'Madame Julie Lefèvre.'

"Never had I received such a shock. In a second it seemed to me as if all were over with me. I felt that a veil had been torn from my eyes, and that I was about to make a horrible and heart-rending discovery.

"So that was she! That big, fat, common woman, she! She had hatched these four girls since I had last seen her. And these little beings surprised me as much as their mother. They came from her; they were big, and already had a place in life. Whereas she no longer counted, she, that marvel of dainty and charming gracefulness. It seemed to me that I had seen her but yesterday, and now I found her so changed. Was it possible? A poignant grief seized my heart, and also a revolt against nature herself, an unreasoning indignation against this brutal, infamous act of destruction.

"I looked at her, bewildered. Then I took her hand in mine, and tears came to my eyes. I wept for her lost youth. For I did not know this fat lady.

"She also was excited, and stammered:

"'I am greatly changed, am I not? What can

you expect?—everything has its time! You see, I have become a mother, nothing but a good mother. Farewell to the rest, that is over. Oh! I never expected you to recognize me if we were to meet. You too have changed. It took me quite a while to be sure that I was not mistaken. Your hair is all white. Just think! Twelve years ago! Twelve years! My oldest girl is already ten.'"

"I looked at the child. And I recognized in her something of her mother's old charm, but something as yet unformed, something that promised for the future. And life seemed to me as swift as a passing train.

"We had reached Maisons-Laffitte. I kissed my old friend's hand. I had found nothing but the most commonplace things to say to her. I was too much upset to talk.

"At night, alone, at home, I stood in front of the mirror for a long time, a very long time. And I remembered what I had been by seeing in my mind's eye my brown moustache, my black hair, and the youthful expression of my face. Now I was old. Farewell!"

THE OLD MAID

COMTE EUSTACHE d'ETCHEGORRY'S lonely country house had the appearance of a poor man's home, where the family do not have a full meal every day and where the bottles contain water oftener than wine, and where no candles are lighted until it grows perfectly dark.

It was an old, timeworn house; the walls were crumbling to pieces, the grated iron gates were rusty, the holes in the broken windows had been stopped with newspapers, but the ancestral portraits hanging on the walls showed that it was no tiller of the soil, no miserable laborer whose strength had gradually failed and left his back bent, who lived there. Tall, knotty elm-trees sheltered it, as if they had been a great green screen, and a large garden, full of wild rose-bushes and straggling plants, as well as sickly-looking vegetables, which came half withered from the sandy soil, extended down to the bank of the river.

From the house one could hear the monotonous sound of the water, which first rushed yellow and impetuous toward the sea, and then seemed driven

back by some invisible force toward the town, which could be seen in the distance, with its pointed spires, its ramparts, its ships at anchor by the side of the quay, and its citadel built on the top of a hill.

Often a strong whiff of the sea blew in, mingled with the resinous smell of pine logs and of the large nets, with great pieces of seaweed clinging to them, that were drying in the sun.

Monsieur d'Etchegorry did not like the country; he was of a sociable rather than a solitary nature, for he never walked alone, but kept step with the retired officers who lived there, and frequently played game after game of piquet at the café, when he was in town; so why did he bury himself in such a lonely place, by the side of a dusty road at Boucau, a village close to the town, where on Sundays the soldiers took off their tunics and sat in their shirt-sleeves in the public houses, drank the thin wine of the country, and flirted with the girls?

What secret reasons had he for selling the mansion he had owned at Bayonne, close to the bishop's palace, and condemning his daughter, a girl of nineteen, to such a dull, listless, solitary life, counting the minutes far from everybody, as if she had been a nun? No one knew, but most persons said that he had lost vast sums in gambling, and had wasted his fortune and ruined his credit in doubtful speculations. They wondered whether he still regretted the tender, sweet woman he had lost, whose spark of life had died out one evening, after

years of suffering, like a church lamp whose oil has been consumed to the last drop. Was he seeking for perfect oblivion, for that soothing repose in nature in which a man becomes calmed and which envelops him like a moist, warm cloth? How could he be satisfied with such an existence, with the bad cooking and the careless, untidy ways of a charwoman, and with the shabby clothes, stained by long use, that he always wore?

His numerous relatives had all been very anxious about it at first, and had tried to cure him of his apparent hypochondria, and to persuade him to occupy himself with something, but as he was obstinate, avoided them, rejected their kindly offers with arrogance and self-sufficiency, even his brothers had abandoned him, and almost renounced him. All their affection had been transferred to the poor child who shared his solitude, and who endured all that misery with the resignation of a saint. Thanks to them, she had a few gleams of pleasure in her exile, and was not dressed like a beggar. She received invitations, and appeared here and there at some ball, concert, or tennis party, and the girl was extremely grateful for it all, although she would have much preferred that nobody should have held out a helping hand to her, but have left her to her dull life, without any day-dreams or homesickness, so that she might grow used to her lot, and day by day lose all that remained to her of her pride of race and of her youth.

With her proud and sensitive nature, she felt that she was not treated exactly as others were in society, that people showed her either too much pity or too much indifference; that they knew all about her private life of undeserved poverty, and that in the folds of her muslin gown they could smell the mustiness of her home. If she was animated or buoyed up with secret hopes in her heart, if there was a smile on her lips and her eyes were bright when she went out at the gate and the horses carried her off to town at a rapid trot, she was all the more sad and tearful when she returned home, and she would shut herself up in her room and find fault with her fate, declaring to herself that she would imitate her father, show relatives and friends politely out, with a passive and resigned gesture, and make herself so disagreeable and embarrassing that they would grow tired of her in the end, leave long intervals between their visits, and finally would not come to see her at all, but would turn away from her, as if from a hospital where incurable patients lay dying.

Nevertheless, the older the Count grew the more the supplies in the small country house diminished and the more painful and harder existence became. If a bit of bread was left uneaten on the table, if an unexpected dish was served, if Marie put a bow of ribbon in her hair, he would heap violent, spiteful reproaches on her, torrents of rage which defile the mouth, and violent threats like those of

a madman who is tormented by some fixed idea. Monsieur d'Etchegorry had dismissed the maid and engaged a charwoman, whom he intended to pay by small sums on account, and he used to go to market with a basket on his arm.

He locked up every scrap of food, would count the lumps of sugar and charcoal, and bolted himself all day long in a room larger than the rest, which for a long time had been a drawing-room. At times he would be rather more gentle, as if he were troubled by vague thoughts, and used to say to his daughter, in an agonized voice and trembling all over: "You never will ask me for any accounts, will you? You never will demand your mother's fortune?"

She always gave him the required promise, did not worry him with any questions, nor utter any complaints, but thinking of her cousins, who would have good dowries, who were growing up happily and peacefully amid careful and affectionate surroundings and beautiful old furniture, who were certain to be loved and married some day, she asked herself why fate was so cruel to some and so kind to others, and what she had done to deserve such a destiny.

Marie-des-Anges d'Etchegorry, without being absolutely pretty, possessed all the charm of her age, and everybody liked her. She was tall and slim like a lily, with beautiful, fine, soft fair hair, eyes of a dark, undecided color, which reminded one of

those springs in the depths of forests in which a ray of the sun is but rarely reflected—mirrors which changed now to violet, then to the color of leaves, but which were most frequently of a velvety blackness—and her whole being exhaled a freshness of childhood, and something that could not be described, but which was pleasant and wholesome.

She lived on through a long course of years, growing old, faithful to some unknown man who might have given her his name, remaining honorable, having resisted temptations and snares, and worthy of the motto that used to be engraved on the tombs of Roman matrons before the Cæsars: "She spun wool and stayed at home."

When she was just twenty-one Marie-des-Anges fell in love, and her beautiful, dark, restless eyes for the first time were lighted with a look of dreamy happiness. For some one seemed to have noticed her; he waltzed with her more frequently than with the other girls, spoke to her in a low voice, lingered near her, and discomposed her so much that she blushed deeply as soon as she heard the sound of his voice.

His name was André de Gèdre; he had just returned from Senegal, where, after several months of daily fighting in the desert, he had won his sub-lieutenant's epaulets.

With his thin, sunburned face, looking awkward in his tight coat, in which his broad shoulders could not expand comfortably, and in which his arms,

which had formerly been used to swinging the sword, were cramped in their tight sleeves, he looked like one of those pirates of former days, who used to scour the seas, pillaging, killing, hanging their prisoners to the yardarms, who were ready to engage a whole fleet, and who returned to port laden with booty, and occasionally with waifs and strays picked up at sea.

He belonged to a race of buccaneers or of heroes, according to the breeze which swelled his sails and carried him North or South. Over head and ears in debt, reduced to gambling at casinos, mortgaging uncertain legacies, and the few acres of land that he still owned at much less than their value, he nevertheless managed to cut a good figure in his hand-to-mouth existence. He never despaired, never showed the blows that he had received, and waited for the final crash in a state of blissful inactivity, while he sought for renewed strength and philosophy in the caresses of women.

Marie-des-Anges seemed to him to be a toy which he could do with as he liked. She had the flavor of unripe fruit; left to herself, and sentimental as she was, she would offer only a very brief resistance to his attacks, and would soon yield to his will, and when he was tired of her and threw her off, she would bow to the inevitable and would not worry him with violent scenes nor stand in his way, with threats on her lips. So he was kind and used to flatter her, and by degrees enveloped her in

the meshes of a net which continually hemmed her in closer and closer. He gained entire possession of her heart and confidence, and, without expressing any wish or making any promises, he managed so to establish his influence over her that she did nothing but what he wished.

Long before Monsieur de Gèdre had addressed any passionate words to her, or any avowal which immediately introduces warmth and danger into a flirtation, Marie-des-Anges had betrayed her love with the candor of a little girl who does not think she is doing any wrong and cannot hide what she thinks, what she is dreaming about, or the tenderness that lies hidden at the bottom of her heart, and she no longer felt that horror of life which had formerly tortured her. She no longer felt herself alone as before—so alone, so lost, even among her own people, that she had become indifferent to everything.

It was pleasant and soothing to be in love and to think that she loved, to have a secret understanding with another heart, to imagine that he was thinking of her at the same time that she was thinking of him, to shelter herself timidly under his protection, to feel more unhappy every time she left him, and to feel greater happiness every time they met.

She wrote him long letters which she did not dare to send him when they were written, for she was timid and feared that he would smile at them,

and she sang the whole day long like a lark in the sunlight, so that Monsieur d'Etchegorry hardly recognized her.

Soon they made appointments in some secluded spot, meeting for a few minutes in the aisles of the cathedral and behind the ramparts or on the promenade of the Allées-Marines, which was always dark on account of the dense foliage.

At last, one evening in June, when the sky was so studded with stars that it might have been taken for a triumphal route of some sovereign, strewn with precious stones and rare flowers, Monsieur de Gèdre entered the large neglected garden.

Marie-des-Anges was waiting for him in a somber walk, with elms on either side, listening for the least noise, looking at the closed windows of the house, and nearly fainting as much from fear as from happiness. They spoke in a low voice. She was close to him, and he must have heard the beating of her heart into which he had cast the first seeds of love, and he put his arms round her and clasped her gently, as if she had been some little bird that he was afraid of hurting, but which he did not wish to allow to escape.

She no longer knew what she was doing, but was in a state of entire, intense, supreme happiness. She was cold and hot by turns and leaned her head instinctively but lightly against André's shoulder. He kissed her hair, touched her forehead with his lips, and at last pressed them to her own. The

girl remained inert and motionless, her eyes full of tears.

He came to see her nearly every evening for two months. She had not the courage to repel him and to speak to him seriously of the future, and could not understand why he had not yet asked her father for her hand, and had not fulfilled his former promises, until one Sunday, as she was coming from high mass, walking on before her cousins, Marie-des-Anges heard the following words from a group in which André was standing, and he was the speaker: "Oh! no," he said, "you are altogether mistaken; I never should do anything so foolish. A man does not marry a girl without a penny; he only amuses himself."

The unhappy girl mastered her feelings, went down the steps of the porch quite steadily, but feeling crushed as if by the news of some terrible disaster, and joined the servant who was waiting to accompany her back to Boucau. The effect of what she had heard caused her a serious illness, and for some time she hovered between life and death, consumed and wasted by a violent fever; and when after a fortnight's suffering she became convalescent, and looked at herself in the glass, she recoiled, as if she were face-to-face with an apparition, for nothing was left of her former beauty.

Her eyes were dull, her cheeks pale and hollow, and there were white streaks in her silky, light hair. Why had she not died in her illness? Why had des-

tiny reserved her for such a trial, and only aggravated her unhappy lot, that of disappointed hopes? But when that rebellious feeling was gone she accepted her cross, fell into a condition of ardent devotion and became crystallized as in the torpor of an old woman, trying with all her might to rid her memory of any recollections she might have cherished in it, and to put a thick black veil between herself and the past.

She never walked in the garden now and never went to Bayonne, and she would have liked to choke herself and to beat herself, when, in spite of her efforts and of her will, she remembered her lost happiness, and when some sensual feeling and a longing for past pleasures awoke in her mind.

This condition lasted four years and altogether destroyed her good looks. She now had the figure and the appearance of an old maid, when her father suddenly died, just as he was about to sit down to dinner. When the lawyer, who was summoned immediately, had ransacked the cupboards and drawers, he discovered a mass of securities, of banknotes, and of gold, which Comte d'Etchegorry, who was a slave to avarice, had amassed eagerly and hidden away; and it was found that Mademoiselle Marie-des-Anges, who was his sole heiress, possessed an income of fifty thousand francs.

She received the news without any emotion, for of what use was such a fortune to her now, and what should she do with it? Her eyes, alas! had

been too much opened by all the tears that had fallen from them for her to delude herself with visionary hopes, and her heart had been too cruelly wounded to warm itself by illusions. She was overcome by melancholy when she thought that in future she would be coveted, she who had been kept at arm's length, as if she had been a leper; that men would come after her money with odious impatience; that now that she was faded and ugly, tired of everything and everybody, she would most certainly have plenty of suitors to refuse, and that, perhaps, *he* would come back to her, attracted by that amount of money, like a hawk hovering over its prey, that he would try to rekindle the dead embers, to revise some spark in them, and to obtain pardon for his cowardice.

Oh, with what bitter pleasure she could have thrown those millions into the road to the ragged beggars, or scattered them about like manna to all who were suffering and dying of hunger, and who had neither roof nor hearth! Naturally she soon became the target at which every one aimed, the goal for which all those who had formerly disdained her most now eagerly tried.

It was not long before Monsieur de Gèdre was in the ranks of her suitors, as she had foreseen, and caused her that last heartburning of seeing him humble, kneeling at her feet, acting a comedy, trying every means to overcome her resistance, and to regain possession of that heart which was closed

against him after having been entirely his, in all its adorable virginity.

Marie-des-Anges had loved him so deeply that his letters, in which he recalled the past and stirred up all the recollections of their love, their kisses, and their dreams, softened her in spite of herself, and came across her profound, incurable sadness like a false light, the reflection of a bonfire, which from a distance illuminates a prison cell for a moment.

He said he was poor himself, and had not wished to drag her into his life of privation and shifts, and she thought to herself that perhaps he had been right; and thus sensibly, like a mother or an elder sister, who has become indulgent and wishes to close her eyes and ears against everything, to forgive again, to forgive always, she excused him and tried to remember nothing but those months of tenderness and ecstasy, those months of happiness, and that he had been the first, the only man who, in the course of her unhappy, wasted life, had given her a moment's contentment, had caused her to dream, and had made her happy, youthful, and loving.

He had shown himself kind to her, and she would be so a hundredfold toward him; and so she became happy again, saying to herself that she would be his benefactress, that even with his hard heart he could not without some feelings of gratitude and emotion accept this sacrifice from a woman, who,

like so many others, might have returned him evil for evil, but who preferred to be kind and considerate, after being in love with him. And that resolution transfigured her, restored to her, temporarily, something of her youth, which had so soon fled away, and, poor, heroic saint among all the saints, she took refuge in a Carmelite convent, so as to escape from this returning temptation, and to bequeath everything of which she could lawfully dispose to Monsieur de Gèdre.

THE TELLIER HOUSE

I

THE men went there every night about eleven o'clock, as they would go to a club. There were six or eight of them; always the same ones, not fast men, but respectable tradesmen, and young men under government or some other employ, and they would drink Chartreuse, and laugh with the girls, or talk seriously with Madame Tellier, whom everybody respected, and then they would go home at twelve o'clock! The younger men would sometimes stay later.

The small, comfortable house was painted yellow and stood at the corner of a street behind St. Etienne's Church, and from the windows one could see the docks thronged with ships being unloaded, the great salt marsh, and, rising beyond it, the Virgin's Hill with its old gray chapel.

Madame Tellier, who came of a respectable family of peasant proprietors in the Department of the Eure, had taken up her business just as she would have become a milliner or a dressmaker. The pre-

judice that is so violent and so deeply rooted in large towns does not exist in the country places in Normandy. The peasant says:

"It is a profitable business," and he sends his daughter to keep an establishment of this character as he would send her to keep a girls' school.

Madame had inherited the house from an old uncle, to whom it had belonged. Monsieur and Madame Tellier, who had formerly been innkeepers near Yvetot, had immediately sold their house, as they thought that the business at Fécamp was more profitable, and they arrived one fine morning to assume the direction of the enterprise, which was declining on account of the absence of the proprietors, who were good people enough in their way, and they soon made themselves liked by their staff and their neighbors.

Monsieur Tellier died of apoplexy two years later, for as the new place kept him in idleness and without any exercise, he had grown excessively stout, and his health had suffered. Since Madame had been a widow, all the frequenters of the establishment made much of her; but people said that personally she was quite virtuous, and even the girls in the house could not discover anything against her. She was tall, stout and affable, and her complexion, which had become pale in the dimness of her house, the shutters of which were rarely opened, shone as if it had been varnished. She wore a fringe of false, curled hair, which gave

her a juvenile look, contrasting strikingly with the ripeness of her figure. She was always smiling and cheerful, and was fond of a joke, but there was a shade of reserve about her, which her occupation had not made her lose entirely. Coarse words shocked her, and when any ill-bred young fellow called her establishment a bad name, she was angry and disgusted. In a word, she had a refined mind, and although she treated her women as friends, yet she often used to say that she and they were not made of the same stuff.

Sometimes, during the week, she would hire a carriage and take some of her girls into the country, where they used to enjoy themselves on the grass by the side of the little river. They were like girls let out from school, and would run races and play childish games. They had a cold dinner on the grass, and drank cider, and went home at night with a delicious feeling of fatigue, and in the carriage they kissed Madame Tellier as their kind mother, who was full of goodness and complaisance.

The house had two entrances. At the corner there was a sort of tap-room, which sailors and the lower class frequented at night, and she had two girls whose special duty it was to wait on them with the assistance of Frederic, a short, fair-haired, beardless fellow, as strong as a horse. They set the half bottles of wine and the jugs of beer on the shaky tables before the customers, and then urged the men to drink.

The three other girls—there were only five of them—formed a kind of aristocracy, and they remained with the company on the first floor, unless they were needed downstairs and if nobody was on the first floor. The salon of Jupiter, where the tradesmen used to meet, was papered in blue, and embellished with a large drawing representing Leda and the swan. The room was reached by a winding staircase, through a narrow door opening on the street, and above this door was a lantern enclosed in wire, such as one still sees in some towns, at the foot of the shrine of a saint, burning all night long.

The house, which was old and damp, smelled slightly mouldy. At times there was an odor of eau de Cologne in the passages, or sometimes from a half-open door downstairs the noisy mirth of the common men sitting and drinking rose to the first floor, much to the disgust of the gentlemen who were there. Madame Tellier, who was on friendly terms with her customers, did not leave the room, and took much interest in what was going on in the town, and they regularly told her all the news. Her serious conversation was a change from the ceaseless chatter of the three women; it was a rest from the shady jokes of those stout men who every evening indulged in the commonplace debauchery of drinking a glass of liquor in company with common women.

The names of the girls on the first floor were

Fernande, Raphaele, and Rosa, the Jade. As the staff was limited, Madame had tried to have each member of it a pattern, an epitome of the feminine type, so that every visitor might find as nearly as possible the realization of his ideal. Fernande represented the handsome blonde; she was very tall, rather stout, and lazy; a country girl, who could not get rid of her freckles, and whose short, light, tow-colored hair, like combed-out hemp, barely covered her head.

Raphaele, who came from Marseilles, played the indispensable part of the handsome Jewess, and was slender, with high cheekbones, which were tinted with rouge, and black hair, covered with pomatum, which curled on her forehead. Her eyes would have been handsome if the right one had not had a flaw in it. Her Roman nose came down over a square jaw, where two false upper teeth contrasted strangely with the dark color of the rest.

Rosa was a little ball of fat, nearly all body, with very short legs, and from morning till night she sang songs, which were alternately *risqué* or sentimental, in a harsh voice; told silly, endless tales, and only stopped talking in order to eat, and left off eating in order to talk; she never was still, and was active as a squirrel, in spite of her fat and her short legs; her laugh, which was a series of shrill cries, resounded here and there ceaselessly, in a bedroom, in the loft, in the café, everywhere, and all about nothing.

The two women on the ground floor, Louise, who was nicknamed La Cocotte, and Flora, whom they called Balançoise, because she limped a little (the former always dressed as the Goddess of Liberty, with a tri-colored sash, and the other as a Spanish woman, with a string of copper coins in her carroty hair, which jingled at every uneven step), looked like cooks dressed up for the carnival. They were like all other women of the lower orders, neither uglier nor prettier than they usually are. They looked like servants at an inn, and were called "the two pumps."

A jealous peace, which was very rarely disturbed, reigned among these five women, thanks to Madame Tellier's conciliatory wisdom, and to her constant good humor; and the establishment, which was the only one of the kind in the little town, was very much frequented. Madame Tellier had succeeded in giving it such a respectable appearance, she was so amiable and obliging to everybody, her good heart was so well known, that she was treated with a certain amount of consideration. The regular customers spent money on her, and were delighted when she was especially friendly toward them, and when they met during the day, they would say: "Until this evening, you know where," just as men say: "At the club, after dinner." In a word Madame Tellier's house was somewhere to go, and the men rarely missed their nightly meetings there.

One evening toward the end of May, the first

arrival, Monsieur Poulin, who was a timber merchant, and had been Mayor, found the door shut. The lantern behind the grating was not lighted; there was not a sound in the house; everything seemed dead. He knocked, gently at first, then more loudly, but nobody answered. Then he went slowly up the street, and when he reached the marketplace he met Monsieur Duvert, the gunmaker, who was going to the same place, so they went back together, but did not meet with any better success. But suddenly they heard a loud noise, close to them, and on going round the house, they saw a number of English and French sailors, who were hammering with their fists at the closed shutters of the taproom.

The two tradesmen immediately made their escape, but a low "Pst!" stopped them; it was Monsieur Tournevau, the fish-curer, who had recognized them and was trying to attract their attention. They told him what had happened, and he was all the more annoyed, as he was a married man and father of a family, and only went there on Saturdays. That was his regular evening off, and now he should be deprived of this dissipation for the whole week!

The three men went together, as far as the quay and on the way they met young Monsieur Philippe, the banker's son, who frequented the place regularly, and Monsieur Pinipesse, the collector; and they all returned to the Rue aux Juifs together, to

make a last attempt. But the exasperated sailors were besieging the house, throwing stones at the shutters and shouting; and the five first-floor customers went away as quickly as possible, and strolled aimlessly about the streets.

After a time they met Monsieur Dupuis, the insurance agent, and then Monsieur Vasse, the Judge of the Tribunal of Commerce, and they all took a long walk, going first to the pier where they sat down in a row on the granite parapet and watched the rising tide, and when the promenaders had sat there for some time, Monsieur Tourneveau said:

"This is not very amusing!"

"Decidedly not," Monsieur Pinipesse replied, and they resumed their walk.

After going through the street alongside the hill, they returned over the wooden bridge which crosses the Retenue, passed close to the railway, and came out again into the marketplace, when suddenly a dispute arose between Monsieur Pinipesse, the collector, and Monsieur Tourneveau, about an edible mushroom which one of them declared he had found in the neighborhood.

As they were out of temper already from having nothing to do, they would probably have come to blows had not the others interfered. Monsieur Pinipesse went off furious, and soon another altercation arose between the ex-Mayor, Monsieur Poulin, and Monsieur Dupuis, the insurance agent, on the subject of the tax collector's salary and the

profits he might make. Insulting remarks were freely passing between them, when a torrent of formidable cries was heard, and the body of sailors, who were tired of waiting so long outside a closed house, came in to the square. They were walking arm in arm, two and two, forming a long procession, and they were shouting furiously. The townsmen hid themselves in a doorway, and the yelling crew disappeared in the direction of the abbey. For a long time they still heard the noise, which diminished like a storm in the distance, and then silence was restored. Monsieur Poulin and Monsieur Dupuis, who were angry with each other, went in different directions, without wishing each other good-night.

The other four set off again, and instinctively went in the direction of Madame Tellier's establishment, which was still closed, silent, impenetrable. A quiet but obstinate drunken man was knocking at the door of the lower room; then he stopped and called Frederic, in a low voice, but finding that he got no answer, he sat down on the doorstep, and waited the course of events.

The others were about to retire, when the noisy band of sailors reappeared at the end of the street. The French sailors were shouting the *Marseillaise,* and the Englishmen *Rule Britannia.* There was a general lurching against the wall, and then the drunken fellows went on their way toward the quay, where a fight broke out between the two

nations, in the course of which an Englishman had his arm broken and a Frenchman his nose split.

The drunken man who had waited outside the door was wailing by that time, as drunken men and children wail when they are vexed, and the others went away. By degrees, calm was restored in the noisy town; here and there, at moments, the distant sound of voices could be heard, and then died away in the distance.

One man only was still wandering about, Monsieur Tourevau, the fish-curer, who was annoyed at having to wait until the following Saturday, and he hoped something would turn up, he did not know what; but he was exasperated at the police for thus allowing an establishment of so much public utility, which they had under their control, to be closed.

He went back to it and examined the walls, trying to find out some reason, and on the shutter he saw a notice stuck up. He struck a wax match and read the following, in a large, uneven hand: "Closed because of the Confirmation."

Then he went away, as he saw it was useless to remain, and left the drunken man lying on the pavement fast asleep, outside that inhospitable door.

The next day all the regular customers, one after the other, found some reason for going through the street, with a bundle of papers under their arm to keep them in countenance, and with a furtive glance they all read that mysterious notice:

"Closed because of the Confirmation."

II

Madame Tellier had a brother, who was a carpenter in their native place, Virville, in the Department of the Eure. When she still kept the inn at Yvetot, she had been godmother to that brother's daughter, who had received the name of Constance Rivet; she herself having been a Rivit. The carpenter, who knew that his sister was in good circumstances, did not lose sight of her, although they did not meet often, for both were kept at home by their occupations, and lived a long way from each other. But as the girl was twelve years old, and about to be confirmed, he took that opportunity to write to his sister, asking her to come and be present at the ceremony. Their old parents were dead, and as she could not well refuse her goddaughter she accepted the invitation. Her brother, whose name was Joseph, hoped that by dint of showing his sister much attention, she might be induced to make her will in the girl's favor, as she had no children of her own.

This sister's occupation did not trouble his scruples in the least, and, besides, nobody knew anything about it at Virville. When they spoke of her, they only said: "Madame Tellier is living at Fécamp," which might mean that she was living on her own private income. It was quite twenty leagues from Fécamp to Virville, and for a peasant, twenty leagues on land is as long a journey as

crossing the ocean would be to city dwellers. The people at Virville never had been further than Rouen, and nothing attracted the citizens of Fécamp to a village of five hundred houses in the middle of a plain, and situated in another department; at any rate, nothing was known about her business.

But the Confirmation-day was coming on, and Madame Tellier was in great embarrassment. She had no substitute, and did not at all wish to leave her house, even for a day; for all the rivalries among the girls upstairs and those downstairs would infallibly break out in some trouble. No doubt Frederic would get drunk, and when he was in that state he would knock anybody down for a mere word. At last, however, she made up her mind to take them all with her, with the exception of the man, to whom she gave a holiday until the next day but one.

When she asked her brother whether they might come, he made no objection, but undertook to lodge them all for a night; so on Saturday morning the eight-o'clock express carried off Madame Tellier and her companions in a second-class carriage. As far as Beuzeville they were alone, and chattered like magpies, but at that station a couple got in. The man, an old peasant, dressed in a blue blouse with a turned-down collar, wide sleeves tight at the wrist, ornamented with white embroidery, wearing an old high hat with long nap, held an enormous

green umbrella in one hand, and a large basket in the other, from which the heads of three frightened ducks protruded. The woman, who sat up stiffly in her rustic finery, had a face like a hen, with a nose that was as pointed as a bill. She sat down opposite her husband and did not stir, as she was startled at finding herself in such fine company.

There was certainly an array of striking colors in the carriage. Madame Tellier was dressed in blue silk from head to foot, and wore a dazzling red imitation French cashmere shawl. Fernande was panting in a Scotch plaid dress, of which her companions had laced the bodice as tight as they could, forcing up her full bust, which was continually heaving up and down. Raphaele, with a bonnet covered with feathers, so that it looked like a birds' nest, wore a lilac dress with gold spots on it, and there was something Oriental about it that suited her Jewish face. Rosa wore a pink petticoat with large flounces, and looked like a very fat child, an obese dwarf; while the two Pumps looked as if they had cut their gowns out of old flowered curtains dating from the Restoration.

As soon as they were no longer alone in the compartment, the ladies put on prim looks, and began to talk of subjects that might give others a high opinion of them. But at Bolbeck a gentleman with a blond beard, a gold chain, and wearing two or three rings, got in, and put several parcels wrapped

in oilcloth on the rack over his head. He looked inclined for a joke, and seemed a good-hearted fellow.

"Are you ladies changing your quarters?" he said, and that question embarrassed them all considerably. Madame Tellier, however, quickly regained her composure, and said sharply, to avenge the honor of her staff:

"I think you might try to be polite!"

He excused himself, and said: "I beg your pardon, I should have said your nunnery."

She could not think of a retort, or, perhaps thinking she had said enough, Madame gave him a dignified bow, and compressed her lips.

Then the gentleman, who was sitting between Rosa and the old peasant, began to wink knowingly at the ducks whose heads were sticking out of the basket, and when he felt that he had fixed the attention of his public, he began to tickle them under the bills and pretended to joke with them, to make the company smile.

"We have left our little pond, quack! quack! to make the acquaintance of the little spit, qu-ack! qu-ack!"

The unfortunate creatures turned their necks away, to avoid his caresses, and made desperate efforts to escape from their wicker prison; then suddenly uttered the most lamentable quacks of distress. The women burst into laughter. They leaned forward and pushed each other, so as to see

better; they were very much interested in the ducks, and the gentleman redoubled his airs, his wit, and his teasing.

Rosa joined in, and leaning over her neighbor's legs, she kissed the three creatures on the head, and immediately all the girls wanted to kiss them in turn, and as they did so the gentleman took them on his knee, jumped them up and down and pinched their arms. The two peasants, who were in even greater consternation than their poultry, rolled their eyes as if possessed, without venturing to move, and their old wrinkled faces showed not a smile, nor a twitch.

Then the gentleman, who was a commercial traveler, offered the ladies suspenders by way of sport, and taking up one of his packages, he opened it. It was a joke, for the parcel contained garters. There were blue silk, pink silk, red silk, violet silk, mauve silk garters, and the buckles were made of two gilt metal Cupids, embracing each other. The girls uttered exclamations of delight and looked at them with that seriousness natural to all women when considering an article of dress. They consulted one another by looks or whispers, and replied in the same manner; and Madame Tellier was longingly handling a pair of orange garters that were broader and more imposing-looking than the rest; really fit for the mistress of such an establishment.

The gentleman waited, for he had an idea.

"Come, my kittens," he said, "you must try them on."

There was a burst of exclamations, and they squeezed their petticoats between their legs, but he quietly waited his time, and said: "Well, if you will not try them on I shall pack them up again."

And he added cunningly: "I offer any pair they like to those who will try them on."

They would not do it, however, and sat up very straight, and looked dignified. But the two Pumps looked so distressed that he renewed his offer to them, and Flora especially visibly hesitated, and he insisted: "Come, my dear, a little courage! Just look at that lilac pair; it will suit your dress admirably——"

That decided her, and pulling up her dress she showed a thick leg fit for a milkmaid, in a coarse wrinkled stocking. The commercial traveler stooped down and fastened the garter. When he had done this, he gave her the lilac pair, and asked: "Who next?"

"I! I!" they all shouted at once, and he began on Rosa, who uncovered a shapeless, round thing without any ankle, a regular "sausage of a leg," as Raphaele used to say.

Finally Madame Tellier herself put out her leg, a handsome, muscular, Norman leg, and in his surprise and pleasure, the commercial traveler gallantly took off his hat to salute that master calf, like a true French cavalier.

The two peasants, who were speechless from surprise, each glanced sidewise out of the corner of one eye, and they looked so exactly like fowls that the man with the blond beard, when he sat up, said "Cut—cut—ker—dah—cut!" under their very noses, and that gave rise to another storm of laughter.

The old people got out at Motteville, with their basket, their ducks, and their umbrella, and they heard the woman say to her husband, as they went away:

"They are a bad lot, and they are going to that cursed place, Paris."

The merry commercial traveler himself left them at Rouen, after behaving so coarsely that Madame Tellier was obliged to put him sharply in his right place, and she added, as a moral: "This will teach us not to talk to the first comer."

At Oissel they changed trains, and at a little station further on Monsieur Joseph Rivet was waiting for them with a large cart with a number of chairs in it, drawn by a white horse.

The carpenter politely kissed all the ladies, and then helped them into his conveyance.

Three of them sat on three chairs at the back, Raphaele, Madame Tellier and her brother on the three chairs in front, while Rosa, who had no seat, settled herself as comfortably as she could on tall Fernande's knees, and then they set off.

But the horse's jerky trot shook the cart so ter-

ribly that the chairs began to dance, and threw the travelers about, to right and left, as if they were dancing puppets, which made them scream and make horrible faces. They clung on to the sides of the vehicle, their bonnets fell on their backs, over their faces and on their shoulders, and the white horse went on, stretching out his head and holding out his little hairless tail, like a rat's, with which he whisked his flanks from time to time.

Joseph Rivet, with one leg on the shafts and the other doubled under him, held the reins with his elbows very high, and kept uttering a kind of clucking sound, which made the horse prick up his ears and go faster.

The green fields extended on either side of the road, and here and there the colza in flower presented a waving expanse of yellow, from which arose a strong, wholesome, sweet and penetrating odor, which the wind carried to some distance. Cornflowers showed their blue heads amid the rye, and the women wanted to gather them, but Monsieur Rivet would not stop.

Sometimes, a whole field appeared to be covered with blood, so thick were the poppies in it, and the cart, which looked as if it were filled with flowers of more brilliant hue, jogged on through fields colored with wild flowers, and disappeared behind the trees of a farm, only to reappear and to go on again through the yellow or green standing crops, studded with red and blue.

One o'clock struck as they drove up to the carpenter's door. They were exhausted, and pale with hunger, as they had eaten nothing since they left home. Madame Rivet ran out, and made them alight, one after another, and kissed them as soon as they were on the ground, and she seemed as if she never would tire of kissing her sister-in-law, whom she apparently wished to monopolize. They had luncheon in the workshop, which had been cleared out for the next day's dinner.

The excellent omelette, followed by boiled chitterlings and accompanied by good hard cider, made them all feel comfortable.

Rivet had taken a glass so that he might drink with them, and his wife cooked, waited on them, brought in the dishes, took them out, and asked each of them in a whisper whether she had everything she wanted. A number of boards standing against the walls and heaps of shavings that had been swept into the corners gave out a smell of planed wood, a smell of a carpenter's shop, that resinous odor which penetrates to the lungs.

All wanted to see the little girl, but she had gone to church, and would not return until evening, so they went out for a stroll in the country.

It was a small village, through which the high-road passed. Ten or a dozen houses on either side of a single street were inhabited by the butcher, the grocer, the carpenter, the innkeeper, the shoemaker and the baker.

The church was at the end of the street, and was surrounded by a small churchyard; and four tall lime-trees, which stood outside the porch, shaded it completely. It was built of flint, in no particular style, and had a slate-roofed steeple. When you had passed it, you were again in the open country, which was varied here and there by clumps of trees which hid the homestead.

Rivet had given his arm to his sister, out of politeness, although he was in his working clothes, and was walking with her in a dignified manner. His wife, who was overwhelmed by Raphaele's gold-striped dress, walked between her and Fernande, and roly-poly Rosa trotted behind with Louise and Flora, the Seesaw, who was limping along, quite tired out.

The inhabitants came to their doors, the children left off playing, and a window curtain would be raised, showing a muslin cap, while an old woman with a crutch, who was almost blind, crossed herself as if it were a religious procession, and they all gazed for a long time at those handsome ladies from town, who had come so far to be present at the confirmation of Joseph Rivet's little girl, and the carpenter rose very much in the public estimation.

As they passed the church they heard some children with shrill voices singing a hymn, but Madame Tellier would not let them go in, for fear of disturbing the little cherubs.

After a walk, during which Joseph Rivet enumerated the principal landed proprietors, spoke about the yield of the land and the productiveness of the cows and sheep, he took his tribe of women home and installed them in his house, and as it was very small, they had to put two women in each room.

Just for once, Rivet said, he would sleep in the workshop on the shavings; his wife was to share her bed with her sister-in-law, and Fernande and Raphaele were to sleep together in the next room. Louise and Flora were put into the kitchen, where they had a mattress on the floor, and Rosa had a little dark closet to herself at the top of the stairs, close to the loft, where the candidate for confirmation was to sleep.

When the little girl came in, she was overwhelmed with kisses; all the women wished to embrace her, with that need of tender expansion, that habit of professional demonstration, which had made them kiss the ducks in the railway carriage.

Each took her on her knees, stroked her soft, fair hair, and pressed her in their arms with vehement and spontaneous outbursts of affection, and the child, who was very good and religious, bore it all patiently.

As the day had been a tiring one for all, they went to bed soon after dinner. The whole village was wrapped in that perfect stillness of the coun-

try, which is almost like a religious silence, and the girls, who were accustomed to the noisy evenings of their establishment, felt rather impressed by the perfect repose of the sleeping village, and they shivered, not with cold, but with those little shivers of loneliness that come over uneasy and troubled hearts.

As soon as they were in bed, two and two together, they clasped each other in their arms, as if to protect themselves against this feeling of awe at the calm, profound slumber of the earth. But Rosa, who was alone in her little dark nook, felt a vague and painful emotion come over her.

She was tossing about in bed, unable to sleep, when she heard the faint sobs of a crying child close to her head, through the partition. She was frightened, and called out, and was answered by a weak voice, broken by sobs. It was the little girl, who was used to sleeping in her mother's room, and who was afraid in her small attic.

Rosa was delighted; she rose softly not to awaken anyone, and went and brought the child into her warm bed, kissed her and pressed her to her bosom, lavished exaggerated manifestations of tenderness on her, and at last grew calmer herself and went to sleep. And until morning the candidate for confirmation slept with her head on Rosa's bosom.

At five o'clock the little church-bell, ringing the Angelus, awoke the women, who usually slept the whole morning long.

The villagers were up already, and the women went busily from house to house, carefully carrying short, starched muslin frocks or very long wax tapers, tied in the middle with a bow of ribbon and gold, and with dents in the wax for the fingers.

The sun was already high in the blue sky, which still had a rosy tint toward the horizon, like a faint remaining trace of dawn. Families of fowls were walking about outside the houses, and here and there a black cock, with a glistening breast, raised his head, crowned by his red comb, flapped his wings, and uttered his shrill crow, which other cocks echoed.

Vehicles of all sorts came from neighboring parishes, stopping at the different houses, and tall Norman women alighted, wearing dark gowns, with kerchiefs crossed over the bosom, fastened with silver brooches a hundred years old.

The men had put blue smocks over their new frock-coats, or over their old dress-coats of green cloth, the two tails of which hung down below their blouses. When the horses were in the stable, there was a double line of rustic conveyances along the road; carts, cabriolets, tilburys, wagonettes, traps of every shape and age, tipping forward on their shafts, or tipping backward with the shafts up in the air.

The carpenter's house was as busy as a bee-hive. The women, in dressing-jackets and petticoats, with their thin, short hair, which looked faded and worn,

hanging down their backs, were busy dressing the child, who was standing quietly on a table, while Madame Tellier directed the movements of her battalion. They washed her, arranged her hair, dressed her, and with the help of pins, they arranged the folds of her dress, and took in the waistband, which was too large.

When she was ready, they charged her to sit down and not move, and the women hurried off to prepare themselves.

The church-bell began to ring again, and its tinkle was lost in the air, like a feeble voice soon drowned in space. The candidates came out of the houses and went toward the parochial building, which contained the two schools and the mansion-house, and which stood at one end of the village, while the church was situated at the other.

The parents, in their best clothes, followed their children, with embarrassed looks and the clumsy movements of bodies bent by toil.

The little girls disappeared in a cloud of muslin, which looked like whipped cream, while the lads, whose appearance suggested embryo waiters in a café, and whose heads shone with pomatum, walked with their legs far apart, so as not to get any dust or dirt on their black trousers.

It was something for a family to be proud of, when a large number of relatives, who had come from a distance, surrounded a child, and the carpenter's triumph was complete.

Madame Tellier's regiment, with its leader at the head, followed Constance; the father gave his arm to his sister, the mother walked beside Raphaele, Fernande with Rosa, and Louise and Flora together; and thus they proceeded majestically through the village, like a general's staff in full uniform, and the effect on the villagers was startling.

At the school, the girls ranged themselves under the supervision of a Sister of Mercy, and the boys under that of the schoolmaster, and the procession set off, singing a hymn as they went. The boys led the way, in two files, between the two rows of vehicles, from which the horses had been taken out, and the girls followed in the same order; and as all the people in the village had given the town ladies the precedence out of politeness, they came immediately behind the girls, and lengthened the double line of the procession still more, three on the right and three on the left, while their brilliant gowns were as striking as a display of fireworks.

When they entered the church, the congregation grew quite excited. They pressed against one another, turned round, and jostled in order to see, and some of the devout ones spoke almost aloud, for they were so astonished at the sight of the ladies whose robes were more elaborate than the priest's vestments.

The Mayor offered them his pew, the first one

on the right, close to the choir, and Madame Tellier sat there with her sister-in-law, Fernande and Raphaele. Rosa, Louise and Flora occupied the second seat in company with the carpenter.

The choir was full of kneeling children, the girls on one side and the boys on the other, and their long wax tapers looked like lances pointing in all directions; three men stood in front of the lectern, singing as loud as they could.

They prolonged the syllables of the sonorous Latin indefinitely, holding on to "Amens" with interminable "a—a's," which the reed stop of the organ sustained in a monotonous, long-drawn-out tone.

A child's shrill voice took up the reply, and from time to time a priest, sitting in a stall and wearing a biretta, got up, muttered something, and sat down again, while the three singers continued, their eyes fixed on the big book of plain chants lying open before them on the outstretched wings of a wooden eagle.

Silence ensued, and the service went on. Toward the close, Rosa, who was holding her head in both hands, suddenly thought of her mother, her village church, and her first communion. She almost fancied that that day had returned, when she was so small and was almost hidden in her white dress, and she began to weep.

At first she wept silently, and the tears dropped slowly from her eyes, but her emotion increased

with her recollections, and she began to sob. She took out her handkerchief, wiped her eyes, and held it to her mouth, so as not to scream, but it was in vain. A sort of rattle escaped her throat, and she was answered by two other profound, heart-breaking sobs; for her two neighbors, Louise and Flora, who were kneeling near her, overcome by similar recollections, were sobbing by her side, amid a flood of tears; and as weeping is contagious, Madame Tellier in turn soon found that her own eyes were wet, and on turning to her sister-in-law, she saw that all the occupants of her seat also were weeping.

Soon, throughout the church, here and there, a wife, a mother, a sister, seized by the strange sympathy of poignant emotion, and affected at the sight of those beautiful ladies on their knees, shaken with sobs, began to moisten her own cambric handkerchief, and press her beating heart with her hand.

As sparks from an engine will set fire to dry grass, so the tears of Rosa and her companions infected the whole congregation in a moment. Men women, old men, and lads in new smocks, soon were all sobbing, and something superhuman seemed to be hovering over their heads—a spirit, the powerful breath of an invisible and all-powerful being.

Suddenly a species of madness seemed to pervade the church, the noise of a crowd in a state of frenzy, a tempest of sobs and stifled cries. It

came like the gusts of wind that blow through the trees in a forest; and the priest, paralyzed by emotion, stammered out incoherent prayers, without finding the right words—ardent prayers of the soul soaring to heaven.

Gradually the people behind him grew calmer. The cantors, in all the dignity of their white surplices, went on in somewhat uncertain voices, and the reed-stop itself seemed hoarse, as if the instrument had been weeping; the priest, however, raised his hand to command silence, and went and stood on the chancel steps, when everybody became silent at the same instant.

After a few remarks on what had just taken place, which he attributed to a miracle, he continued, turning to the seats where the carpenter's guests were sitting:

"I especially thank you, my dear sisters, who have come from so long a distance, and whose presence among us, whose evident faith and ardent piety, have set so salutary an example to all. You have edified my parish; your emotion has warmed all hearts; without you, this great day would not, perhaps, have had this really divine character. It is sufficient, at times, that there should be one chosen lamb, for the Lord to descend on his flock."

His voice failed him again from emotion, and he said no more, but concluded the service.

Everyone left the church as quickly as possible; the children themselves were restless and tired from

so prolonged a tension of the mind. The parents left the church, to see about the dinner at home.

A crowd stood outside, a noisy crowd, a babel of loud voices, in which the shrill Norman accent was discernible. The villagers formed two ranks, and when the children appeared, each family took possession of their own.

The whole houseful of women caught hold of Constance, surrounded her and kissed her, and Rosa was especially demonstrative. At last she took hold of one hand, while Madame Tellier took the other, and Raphaele and Fernande held up her long muslin skirt, that it might not drag in the dust. Louise and Flora brought up the rear with Madame Rivet; and the child, who was very silent and thoughtful, set off for home, in the midst of this guard of honor.

Dinner was served in the workshop, on long boards supported by trestles, and through the open door they could see all the gayety that was going on in the village. Everywhere they were feasting; through every window were to be seen tables surrounded by families in their Sunday best; a cheerful noise was heard in every house, while the men sat in their shirt-sleeves, drinking glass after glass of cider.

In the carpenter's house the gayety maintained somewhat of an air of reserve, the consequence of the emotion of the girls in the morning; Rivet was the only one who was in a jolly mood, and he

drank to excess. Madame Tellier looked at the clock every moment, for, in order not to lose two days running, they must take the 3:55 train, which would bring them to Fécamp by dark.

The carpenter tried very hard to distract her attention, so as to keep his guests until the next day, but he did not succeed, for she never joked when there was business on hand, and as soon as they had had their coffee she ordered her girls to make haste and get ready; then, turning to her brother, she said:

"You must harness the horse immediately," and went herself to finish her preparations.

When she came down again, her sister-in-law was waiting to speak to her about the child, and a long conversation took place, in which, however, nothing was settled. The carpenter's wife was artful, and pretended to be very much affected, but Madame Tellier, who was holding the girl on her knee, would not pledge herself to anything definite, but merely gave vague promises—she would not forget her, there was plenty of time, and besides, they would meet again.

But the conveyance did not come to the door, and the women did not come downstairs. Upstairs, they even heard loud laughter, romping, little screams, and much clapping of hands, and so, while the carpenter's wife went to the stable to see whether the cart was ready, Madame went upstairs.

Rivet, very drunk, was romping with Rosa, who

was half choking with laughter. Louise and Flora were holding him by the arms and trying to calm him, as they were shocked at his levity after that morning's ceremony; but Raphaele and Fernande were urging him on, writhing and holding their sides with laughter, and they uttered shrill cries at every rebuff the drunken fellow received.

The man was furious; his face was red, and he was trying to shake off the two women who were clinging to him, while he was pulling Rosa's skirt with all his might, and stammering incoherently

Madame Tellier, very indignant, went up to her brother, seized him by the shoulders, and threw him out of the room with such violence that he fell against the wall in the passage, and a minute afterward, they heard him pumping water on his head in the yard. When he reappeared with the cart, he was quite calm.

They set off in the same way they had come the day before, and the little white horse went along with his quick, jogging trot. Under the hot sun, their fun, which had been checked during dinner, broke out again. The girls now were amused at the jolting of the cart, pushed their neighbors' chairs, and burst out laughing every moment.

There was a glare of light over the country, which dazzled their eyes, and the wheels raised two trails of dust along the highroad. Presently, Fernande, who was fond of music, asked Rosa to sing something, and she boldly struck up the *Gros Curé*

de Meudon, but Madame Tellier made her stop immediately, as she thought it a very unsuitable song for such a day, and she added:

"Sing us something of Béranger's." And so, after a moment's hesitation, Rosa began Béranger's song *The Grandmother* in her worn voice, all the girls, and even Madame Tellier herself, joining in the chorus:

"How I regret
My dimpled arms,
My nimble legs,
And vanished charms."

"That is capital!" Rivet declared, carried away by the rhythm, and they shouted the refrain to every stanza, while Rivet beat time on the shaft with his foot, with the reins on the back of the horse, who, as if he himself were carried away by the rhythm, broke into a wild gallop, and threw all the women in a heap, one on top of another, in the bottom of the cart.

They got up, laughing as if they were mad, and the song went on, shouted at the top of their voices, beneath the burning sky, among the ripening grain, to the rapid gallop of the little horse, who set off every time the refrain was sung, and galloped a hundred yards, to their great delight, while occasionally a stone-breaker by the roadside sat up and looked at the load of shouting females through his wire spectacles.

When they alighted at the station, the carpenter said:

"I am sorry you are going; we might have had some merry times together." But Madame Tellier replied very sensibly: "Everything has its right time, and we cannot always be enjoying ourselves." Then Rivet had a sudden inspiration:

"Look here, I will come and see you at Fécamp next month." And he gave Rosa a roguish and knowing look.

"Come," his sister replied, "you must be sensible; you may come if you like, but you are not to be up to any tricks."

He did not reply, and as they heard the whistle of the train, he immediately began to kiss them all. When it came to Rosa's turn, he tried to get to her mouth, which she, however, smiling with her lips closed, turned away from him each time by a rapid movement of her head to one side. He held her in his arms, but he could not attain his object, as his large whip, which he was holding in his hand and waving behind the girl's back in desperation, interfered with his efforts.

"Passengers for Rouen, take your seats!" a guard cried, and they got in. There was a slight whistle, followed by a louder one from the engine, which noisily puffed out its first jet of steam, while the wheels began to turn a little with a visible effort, and Rivet left the station and ran along by the track to get another look at Rosa; as the carriage

passed him he began to crack his whip and jump, while he sang at the top of his voice:

"How I regret
My dimpled arms,
My nimble legs,
And vanished charms."

He watched a white handkerchief, which somebody was waving, as it disappeared in the distance.

III

All slept the peaceful sleep of quiet consciences until they reached Rouen, and when they returned to the house, refreshed and rested, Madame Tellier could not refrain from saying:

"It was all very well, but all the time I was longing to get home."

They hurried over their supper, and then, after they had assumed their usual evening costume, they waited for their regular visitors. The little colored lamp outside the door told the passers-by that Madame Tellier had returned, and in a moment the news spread, nobody knew how or through whom.

Monsieur Philippe, the banker's son, even carried his forgetfulness so far as to send a special messenger to Monsieur Tournevau, who was in the bosom of his family.

The fish-curer invited several cousins to dinner every Sunday, and they were having coffee, when a man came in with a letter in his hand. Monsieur Tournevau was much excited; he opened the envelope and grew pale; it contained only these words in pencil:

"The cargo of cod has been found; the ship has come into port; good business for you. Come immediately."

He felt in his pockets, gave the messenger twopence, and suddenly blushing to his ears, he said: "I must go out." He handed his wife the laconic and mysterious note, rang the bell, and when the servant came in he asked her to bring him his hat and coat immediately. As soon as he was in the street, he began to hurry, and the way seemed to him to be twice as long as usual, in consequence of his impatience.

Madame Tellier's establishment had assumed quite a festal look. On the ground floor, a number of sailors were making a deafening noise, and Louise and Flora drank with one and another, and were being called for in every direction at once.

The upstairs room was full by nine o'clock. Monsieur Vasse, the Judge of the Tribunal of Commerce, Madame Tellier's regular but platonic wooer, was talking to her in a corner in a low voice, and both were smiling, as if they were about to come to an understanding.

Monsieur Poulin, the ex-Mayor, was talking to Rosa, and she was patting the old gentleman's white whiskers.

Tall Fernande was on the sofa, her feet on the coat of Monsieur Pinipesse, the tax-collector, and her back against young Monsieur Philippe; her right arm was around his neck, while she held a cigarette in her left hand.

Raphaele appeared to be talking seriously with Monsieur Dupuis, the insurance agent, and she finished by saying: "Yes, I will, yes."

The door opened suddenly; Monsieur Tournevau came in, and was greeted with enthusiastic cries of: "Long live Tournevau!" And Raphaele, who was dancing alone up and down the room, threw herself into his arms. He seized her in a vigorous embrace and, without saying a word, lifted her as if she had been a feather.

Rosa was still chatting to the ex-Mayor, kissing him and pulling both his whiskers at the same time in order to keep his head straight.

Fernande and Madame Tellier remained with the four men, and Monsieur Philippe exclaimed: "I will pay for some champagne; bring three bottles, Madame Tellier." Fernande gave him a hug, and whispered to him: "Play a waltz, will you?" So he sat down at the old piano in the corner, and managed to drum a wheezy waltz out of the depths of the instrument.

The tall girl put her arms around the tax-collec-

tor, Madame Tellier let Monsieur Vasse take her round the waist, and the two couples turned round, kissing as they danced. Monsieur Vasse, who had formerly danced in good society, waltzed with such elegance that Madame Tellier was quite captivated.

Frederic brought the champagne; the first cork popped, and Monsieur Philippe played the introduction to a quadrille, through which the four dancers walked in society fashion, decorously, with propriety, deportment, bows and curtseys, and then they began to drink.

Monsieur Philippe next struck up a lively polka, and Monsieur Tournevau led off with the handsome Jewess, whom he held without letting her feet touch the ground. Monsieur Pinipesse and Monsieur Vasse had begun again with renewed vigor, and from time to time one couple or another would stop to toss off a long draught of sparkling wine. The dance was threatening to become never-ending, when Rosa opened the door.

"I want to dance!" she exclaimed. And she caught hold of Monsieur Dupuis, who was sitting idle on the couch, and the dance began again.

But the bottles were empty. "I will pay for one," Monsieur Tournevau said. "So will I," Monsieur Vasse declared. "And I will do the same," Monsieur Dupuis remarked.

All began to clap their hands, and it soon became a regular ball. From time to time Louise and Flora ran upstairs quickly and had a few turns,

while their patrons below grew impatient; then they returned regretfully to the tap-room. At midnight everyone was still dancing.

Madame Tellier let them amuse themselves while she had long private talks in corners with Monsieur Vasse, as if to settle the last details of something that had been agreed upon.

At last, at one o'clock, the two married men, Monsieur Tournevau and Monsieur Pinipesse, declared that they must go home, and wanted to pay. Nothing was charged for except the champagne, and that cost only six francs a bottle, instead of ten, which was the usual price; and when they expressed their surprise at such generosity, Madame Tellier, who was beaming, said to them:

"We don't have a holiday every day."

THE PARRICIDE

A PLEA of insanity had been presented by the lawyer. Could anyone explain this strange crime otherwise?

One morning, on a grassy slope near Chatou, two corpses had been found, of a man and a woman, who had been well known and wealthy. They were no longer young, and had been married since the preceding year, the woman having been a widow for three years before that.

It was not known that they had enemies; they had not been robbed. It appeared that they had been thrown from the roadside into the river, after being struck, one after the other, with a long iron spike.

The inquest revealed nothing. Several boatmen who had been questioned knew nothing. The matter was about to be given up, when a young cabinet-maker from a neighboring village, Georges Louis, nicknamed "the *bourgeois*," gave himself up to justice.

To all questions his only reply was:

"I had known the man for two years, the woman

for six months. They often engaged me to repair old furniture for them, because I am a clever workman."

When he was asked: "Why did you kill them?" he would answer obstinately: "I killed them because I wanted to kill them."

Nothing more could be got out of him.

The man had undoubtedly been an illegitimate child, put out to nurse and then abandoned. He had no other name than Georges Louis, but as he became particularly intelligent, after growing up with a certain good taste and native refinement which his acquaintances did not possess, he was nicknamed "the *bourgeois,*" and never was called otherwise. He had become remarkably clever at the trade of a cabinet-maker. It was said that he was a socialist fanatic, a believer in communistic and nihilistic doctrines, a great reader of bloodthirsty novels, an influential political agitator and a moving orator in the public meetings of workmen or of farmers.

The lawyer had pleaded insanity.

Indeed, how could one imagine that this workman should kill his best customers, rich and generous (as he knew), from whom in two years he had earned three thousand francs (his books showed it)? Only one explanation could be offered: insanity, the fixed idea of the nondescript who wreaks vengeance on two *bourgeois,* on all the *bourgeoisie,* and the lawyer made a clever allusion

to this nickname of "the *bourgeois,*" given throughout the neighborhood to this poor wretch.

"Is this irony not enough," he said, "to unbalance the mind of this poor fellow, who has neither father nor mother? He is an ardent republican. What am I saying? He even belongs to the same political party the members of which the Government formerly shot or exiled, but which it now welcomes with open arms—this party to which arson is a principle and murder an ordinary occurrence.

"These gloomy doctrines, now applauded in public meetings, have ruined this man. He has heard republicans—even women, yes, women!—ask for the blood of Monsieur Gambetta, and of Monsieur Grévy; his weakened mind gave way; he wanted blood—the blood of a *bourgeois!*

"It is not he whom you should condemn, gentlemen, it is the Commune!"

Throughout the courtroom murmurs of assent could be heard. Everyone felt that the lawyer had won his case. The prosecuting attorney did not oppose him.

The presiding judge asked the accused the customary question: "Prisoner, is there anything that you wish to add to your defense?"

The man arose.

He was a short, flaxen blond, with calm, clear, gray eyes. A strong, frank, distinct voice came from this frail-looking young man, which, at the first words, quickly changed the opinion of him which had been formed.

He spoke loud, in a declamatory manner, but so distinctly that every word could be understood in the farthest corners of the long hall:

"Your Honor, as I do not wish to go to a hospital for the insane, and as I even prefer death to that, I will confess everything.

"I killed this man and this woman because they were my parents.

"Now, listen and judge me.

"A woman, having given birth to a boy, sent him out somewhere to nurse. Did she even know to what place her accomplice carried this innocent little being, condemned to eternal misery, to the shame of an illegitimate birth; to more than that —to death, since he was abandoned, since the nurse, no longer receiving the monthly pension, could let him die of hunger and neglect, as is often the case?

"The woman who nursed me was honest, better, more noble, more of a mother than my own mother. She brought me up. She did wrong in doing her duty. It is more humane to let them die, these little wretches who are abandoned in suburban villages, as garbage is thrown away.

"I grew up with an indistinct impression that I bore some burden of shame. One day the other children called me a 'bastard.' They did not know what this word meant, which one of them had heard at home. I, too, was ignorant of its meaning, but none the less I felt the sting.

"I was, I may say, one of the cleverest boys in

the school. I should have been a good man, your Honor, perhaps a man of superior intellect, had not my parents committed the crime of abandoning me.

"Yes, this crime was committed against me. I was the victim, they the guilty ones. I was defenseless, they were pitiless. Their duty was to love me; they cast me off.

"To be sure, I owed them life—but is life a boon? To me, at least, it was a misfortune. After their shameful desertion, I owed them only vengeance. They committed against me the most inhuman, the most infamous, the most monstrous crime that can be committed against a human creature.

"A man that has been insulted, strikes; a man that has been robbed, takes back his own by force. A man that has been deceived, played upon, tortured, kills; a man that has been struck, kills; a man that has been dishonored, kills. I have been robbed, deceived, tortured, morally struck, dishonored—all this to a greater degree than those whose anger you excuse.

"I revenged myself—I killed! It was my legitimate right. I took their happy life in exchange for the terrible one which they had forced on me.

"You will call me parricide! Were these persons my parents, for whom I was an abominable burden, a terror, an infamous shame; for whom my birth was a calamity, and my life a threat of dis-

grace? They sought their selfish pleasure; they got an unexpected child. They suppressed the child. My turn came to do the same for them.

"Yet, until quite recently, I was ready to love them. As I have said, this man, my father, came to me for the first time two years ago. I suspected nothing. He ordered two articles of furniture. I discovered later that, under the seal of secrecy, naturally, he had sought information from the priest.

"He returned often. He gave me a quantity of work and paid me well. Sometimes he would even talk to me of one thing or another. I felt a growing affection for him.

"At the beginning of this year he brought with him his wife, my mother. When she entered, she trembled so that I thought her to be suffering from some nervous disease. Then she asked for a seat and a glass of water. She said nothing; she looked around abstractedly at my work, and answered only 'yes' or 'no,' at random, to all the questions he asked her. After she had gone I thought her a little unbalanced mentally.

"The next month they returned. She was then calm, self-controlled. That day they chatted a long time, and left me a rather large order. I saw her three times more, without suspecting anything. But one day she began to talk to me of my life, of my childhood, of my parents. I answered: 'Madame, my parents were wretches who deserted

me.' Then she clutched at her heart and fell in a swoon. I thought immediately: 'She is my mother!' but I took care not to let her notice anything. I wished to observe her.

"I, in turn, sought out information about them. I learned that they had been married since last July, my mother having been a widow for only three years. There had been rumors that they had loved each other during the lifetime of the first husband, but there was no proof of it. *I* was the proof!—the proof which they had at first hidden and then hoped to destroy.

"I waited. She returned one evening, escorted as usual by my father. That day she seemed deeply moved, I know not why. When she was leaving, she said to me: 'I wish you success, because you seem to me to be honest and a hard worker; some day, you will undoubtedly think of being married; I have come to help you choose freely the woman that may suit you. I have been married once against my inclination, and I know what suffering it causes. Now I am rich, childless, free, mistress of my fortune. Here is your dowry.'

"She held out to me a large sealed envelope.

"I looked her straight in the eyes; and said: 'Are you my mother?'

"She recoiled a few steps and hid her face in her hands, in order no longer to see me. He, the man, my father, supported her in his arms, and cried to me: 'You must be mad!"

"I answered: 'Not in the least. I *know* that you are my parents. I cannot be thus deceived. Admit it and I will keep the secret; I will bear you no ill will; I will remain what I am, a carpenter.'

"He retreated toward the door, still supporting his wife, who was beginning to sob. I locked the door quickly, put the key in my pocket, and continued: 'Look at her and dare to deny that she is my mother.'

"Then he flew into a passion, became pale, terrified at the thought that the scandal which had so far been avoided might break out suddenly; that their position, their good name, their honor might all at once be lost; he stammered: 'You are a rascal; you wish to obtain money from us. That is the thanks we get for trying to help the common people!'

"My mother, bewildered, kept repeating: 'Let us go away from here, let us go away!'

"When he found the door locked, he exclaimed: 'If you do not open this door immediately I will have you thrown into prison for blackmail and assault!'

"I remained calm; I opened the door quietly and saw them disappear in the darkness.

"Then it seemed that I had been suddenly orphaned, deserted, pushed to the wall. I was seized with an overwhelming sadness, mingled with anger, hatred, disgust; my whole being rose in revolt against the injustice, the meanness, the dishonor,

the rejected love. I began to run, in order to overtake them along the Seine, which they had to follow in order to reach the station of Chatou.

"I soon overtook them. It was now quite dark. I crept up behind them softly, that they might not hear me. My mother was still weeping. My father was saying: 'It's all your own fault. Why did you wish to see him? It was absurd, in our position. We could have assisted him from a distance, without showing ourselves. Of what use are these dangerous visits, since we cannot recognize him?'

"Then I rushed up to them, beseeching. I cried: 'You see! You *are* my parents. You have already rejected me once, would you repulse me again?'

"Then, your Honor, he struck me! I swear it on my honor, before the law and my country. He struck me, and, as I seized him by the collar, he drew a revolver from his pocket.

"The blood rushed to my head; I no longer knew what I was doing; I had my compasses in my pocket; I struck him with them as often as I could.

"Then my mother began to cry: 'Help! Murder!' and to pull my beard. They tell me that I killed her, too. How do I know what I did then?

"When I saw them both lying on the ground, without thinking, I threw them into the Seine.

"That is all. Now, sentence me."

The prisoner sat down. After this revelation, the case was carried over to the following session. It will come up very soon. If we were jurymen, what should we do with this parricide?

THE FORTUNE OF WAR

BESIEGED Paris was in the clutch of famine. Even the birds on the roofs and the rats in the sewers were growing scarce. People would eat anything they could get.

As Monsieur Morissot, watchmaker by profession and idler for the time being, was strolling along the boulevard one bright January morning, his hands in his trousers' pockets and his stomach empty, he suddenly came face-to-face with an acquaintance—Monsieur Sauvage, an old fishing acquaintance.

Before the war broke out Morissot had been in the habit, every Sunday morning, of setting forth with a bamboo rod in his hand and a tin box on his back. He took the Argenteuil train, got out at Colombes, and walked to the Ile Marante. The moment he arrived at this place of his dreams he began to fish, and usually he fished till it was dark.

Every Sunday he met in this very place Monsieur Sauvage, a stout, jolly little man, a draper in the Rue Notre Dame de Lorette, also an ardent

fisherman. They often spent half the day side by side, rod in hand, with feet hanging over the water, and a warm friendship had sprung up between the two men.

Some days they did not even speak; at other times they chatted; but they understood each other perfectly without the aid of words, having congenial tastes and feelings.

In spring, about ten o'clock in the morning when the early sun caused a slight fog to float on the water and gently warmed the backs of the two enthusiastic fishermen, Morissot would occasionally say to his neighbor:

"It is very pleasant here."

To which the other would reply: "I can't imagine anything better!"

These few words sufficed to make them understand and appreciate each other.

In autumn, when the setting sun shed a blood-red glow over the western sky, and the reflection of the crimson clouds tinged the whole river with red, flushed the faces of the two friends, and gilded the trees, whose leaves were already turning at the first chill hint of winter, Monsieur Sauvage would sometimes smile at Morissot, and say:

"What a superb spectacle!"

And Morissot would answer, without taking his eyes from his float:

"This is much better than the boulevard, isn't it?"

This morning, when they recognized each other, they shook hands cordially, affected at the thought of meeting under such changed conditions.

Monsieur Sauvage, with a sigh, murmured: "These are sad times!"

Morissot shook his head mournfully.

"And such weather! This is the first fine day of the year."

The sky was, in fact, of a bright, cloudless blue.

They walked along together, reflective and sad.

"Only to think of the fishing!" said Morissot. "What fine times we used to have!"

"When shall we be able to fish again?" asked Monsieur Sauvage.

They entered a small café and took an absinthe together, then resumed their walk along the boulevard.

Morissot stopped suddenly.

"Shall we have another absinthe?" he said.

"As you please," agreed Monsieur Sauvage.

And they entered another wine-shop.

They were quite unsteady when they came out, owing to the effect of the alcohol on their empty stomachs. It was a mild day, and a gentle breeze fanned their faces. The fresh air completed the effect of the alcohol on Monsieur Sauvage. He stopped suddenly, saying:

"Suppose we go there?"

"Where?"

"Fishing."

"But where?"

"Why, to the old place. The French outposts are close to Colombes. I know Colonel Dumoulin, and we can easily get leave to pass."

Morissot trembled with eagerness.

"Very well. I agree."

So they separated, to get their rods and lines.

An hour later they were walking side by side on the highroad. Presently they reached the villa occupied by the Colonel. He smiled at their request, granted it, and they resumed their walk, furnished with a password.

Soon they left the outposts behind them, made their way through deserted Colombes, and found themselves on the outskirts of the small vineyards that border the Seine. It was about eleven o'clock.

Before them lay the village of Argenteuil, apparently lifeless. The heights of Orgement and Sannois overlooked the landscape. The great plain, extending as far as Nanterre, was quite empty—a waste of lead-colored soil and bare cherry-trees.

Monsieur Sauvage, pointing to the heights, murmured:

"The Prussians are up there!"

The sight of the deserted country filled the two friends with vague misgivings.

The Prussians! They never had seen them as yet, but they had felt their presence in the neighborhood of Paris for months past—ruining France, pillaging, massacring, starving the people. A kind

of superstitious terror mingled with the hatred they already felt toward this unknown, victorious nation.

"Suppose we were to meet any of them?" said Morissot.

"We would offer them some fish," replied Monsieur Sauvage, with that Parisian light-heartedness which nothing can wholly quench.

Still, they hesitated to show themselves in the open country, overawed by the perfect silence that reigned around them.

At last Monsieur Sauvage said boldly:

"Come, we must make a start; only let us be careful!"

They made their way through one of the vineyards, bent almost double, creeping along beneath the cover afforded by the vines, with eye and ear alert.

A piece of bare ground remained to be crossed before they could gain the river bank. They ran across this, and, as soon as they were at the water's edge, concealed themselves among the dry reeds.

Morissot placed his ear to the ground, to ascertain, if possible, whether footsteps were coming their way. He heard nothing. They seemed to be entirely alone. Their confidence was restored, and they began to fish.

Before them the deserted Ile Marante hid them from the farther shore. The little restaurant was closed and looked as if it had been deserted for years.

Monsieur Sauvage caught the first gudgeon, Monsieur Morissot the second, and almost every moment one or the other raised his line with a little, glittering, silvery fish wriggling at the end; they were having excellent sport.

They slipped their catch gently into a close-woven net lying at their feet; they were filled with joy—the joy of once more indulging in a pastime of which they had long been deprived.

The sun poured its rays on their backs; they no longer heard anything or thought of anything. They ignored the rest of the world; they were fishing.

But suddenly a rumbling sound, which seemed to come from the bowels of the earth, shook the ground beneath them: the guns were resuming their work.

Morissot turned his head and could see toward the left beyond the banks of the river, the formidable outline of Mont-Valérien, from whose summit arose a white puff of smoke.

The next instant a second puff followed the first, and in a few moments a fresh detonation made the earth tremble.

Others followed, and minute by minute the mountain gave forth its deadly breath and a milky vapor, which rose slowly into the peaceful heaven and floated, cloud-like, above the summit of the cliff.

Monsieur Sauvage shrugged his shoulders.

"They are at it again!" he said.

Morissot, who was anxiously watching his float bobbing up and down, was suddenly seized with the angry impatience of a peaceful man toward the madmen who were firing thus, and remarked indignantly:

"What fools they are to kill one another like that!"

"They're worse than animals," replied Monsieur Sauvage.

And Morissot, who had just caught a bleak, declared:

"And to think that it will be just the same so long as there are governments!"

"The Republic would not have declared war," interposed Monsieur Sauvage.

Morissot interrupted him:

"Under a king we have foreign wars; under a republic we have civil war."

And the two began placidly discussing political problems with the sound common sense of peaceful, matter-of-fact citizens—agreeing on one point: that they never should be free. And Mont-Valérien thundered ceaselessly, demolishing the houses of the French with its cannon balls, crushing out lives of men, destroying many a dream, many a cherished hope, many a prospective happiness; ruthlessly causing endless woe and suffering in the hearts of wives, of daughters, of mothers, in other lands.

"Such is life!" declared Monsieur Sauvage.

"Say, rather, such is death!" replied Morissot.

But they suddenly trembled with alarm at the sound of footsteps behind them, and, turning round, they perceived close at hand four tall, bearded men, dressed after the manner of livery servants and wearing flat caps on their heads. They were covering the two anglers with their rifles.

The rods slipped from their owners' grasp and floated away down the river.

Within a few seconds they were seized, bound, thrown into a boat, and taken across to the Ile Marante.

And behind the house they had thought deserted were a score of German soldiers.

A shaggy-looking giant, who was bestriding a chair and smoking a long clay pipe, addressed them in excellent French with the words:

"Well, gentlemen, have you had good luck with your fishing?"

Then a soldier deposited at the officers' feet the net full of fish, which he had taken care to bring away. The Prussian smiled.

"Not bad, I see. But we have something else to talk about. Listen to me, and don't be alarmed:

"You must know that, in my eyes, you are two spies sent to reconnoiter me and my movements. Naturally, I capture you and I shoot you. You pretended to be fishing, the better to disguise your real errand. You have fallen into my hands, and must take the consequences. Such is war.

"But as you came here through the outposts you must have a password for your return. Tell me that password, and I will let you go."

The two friends, pale as death, stood silently side by side, a slight fluttering of the hands alone betraying their emotion.

"No one will ever know," continued the officer. "You will return peacefully to your homes, and the secret will disappear with you. If you refuse, it means death—instant death. Choose for yourselves!"

They stood motionless, and did not open their lips.

The Prussian, perfectly calm, went on, with hand outstretched toward the river:

"Just think that in five minutes you will be at the bottom of that water. In five minutes! You have relatives, I presume?"

Mont-Valérien still thundered.

The two fishermen remained silent. The German turned and gave an order in his own language. Then he moved his chair a little way off, that he might not be so near the prisoners, and a dozen men stepped forward, rifle in hand, and took up a position twenty paces off.

"I give you one minute," said the officer; "not a second longer."

Then he rose quickly, went over to the two Frenchmen, took Morissot by the arm, led him a short distance off, and said in a low voice:

"Quick! the password! Your friend will know nothing. I will pretend to relent."

Morissot answered not a word.

Then the Prussian took Monsieur Sauvage aside in like manner, and made him the same proposal.

Monsieur Sauvage made no reply.

Again they stood side by side.

The officer issued his orders; the soldiers raised their rifles. Then by chance Morissot's eyes fell on the net full of gudgeons lying in the grass a few feet from him.

A ray of sunlight made the still quivering fish glisten like silver. And Morissot's heart sank. Despite his efforts at self-control his eyes filled with tears.

"Good-by, Monsieur Sauvage," he faltered.

"Good-by, Monsieur Morissot," replied Sauvage.

They shook hands, trembling from head to foot with a dread beyond their mastery.

The officer cried:

"Fire!"

The twelve shots were as one.

Monsieur Sauvage fell forward instantaneously. Morissot, being the taller, swayed slightly and fell across his friend with face turned skyward and blood oozing from a rent in the breast of his coat.

The German issued fresh orders. His men dispersed, and presently returned with ropes and large stones, which they attached to the feet of the two friends; then they carried them to the river bank.

Mont-Valérien, its summit now enshrouded in smoke, still continued to thunder.

Two soldiers took Morissot by the head and the feet; two others did the same with Sauvage. The bodies, swung lustily by strong hands, were cast to a distance, and, describing a curve, fell feet foremost into the stream.

The water splashed high, foamed, eddied, then grew calm; tiny waves lapped the shore.

A few streaks of blood flecked the surface of the river.

The officer, calm throughout, remarked, with grim humor:

"It's the fishes' turn now!"

Then he returned to the house.

Suddenly he caught sight of the net full of gudgeons, lying in the grass. He picked it up, examined it, smiled, and called:

"Wilhelm!"

A white-aproned soldier responded to the summons, and the Prussians, tossing him the catch of the two murdered men, said:

"Have these fish fried for me at once, while they are still alive; they'll make a tasty dish."

Then he resumed his pipe.

HUMBLE HAPPINESS

IT was tea-time—the hour before the lamps were brought in. The villa overlooked the sea; the sun had disappeared and left in its wake a crimson sky flecked with gold; and the Mediterranean, not a ripple disturbing its gleaming surface, looked like a polished and limitless sheet of metal.

To the right, in the far distance, jagged mountain peaks reared their dusky outline against the tender purple of the sunset.

The company were talking of love—that old, old theme—and for the hundredth time were saying things well known to them all. The gentle melancholy of twilight made their words slow and soft, their hearts more easily moved than usual; and the word "love," pronounced now in a man's firm voice, now in a woman's musical tones, held an unwonted glamor for them all. It appeared to fill the little drawing-room, to flutter, birdlike, through the air, to hover like a spirit over their heads.

"Can one's love last for years?"

"Yes," affirmed some.

"No," said others.

Cases were quoted, examples cited; and all the guests, men and women, full of recollections they could not reveal, which arose insistently in their minds, seemed profoundly moved, and spoke with hushed voices of that mystic, potent bond which unites man and woman for good or ill.

But suddenly some one who had been gazing out into the distance cried:

"Oh, look! look! What is that?"

Above the sea a large, grayish, indeterminate mass rose on the horizon.

The women stood up, and looked wonderingly at this unexpected object, which they never before had seen. Some one said:

"That is Corsica! It is visible like that only two or three times in the year, under certain exceptional conditions, when the air, being absolutely clear, does not conceal it behind those curtains of sea mist which usually veil the horizon."

The Corsican mountains were vaguely distinguishable; the gazers fancied they could even see the snow on their peaks. And all were surprised, moved, well-nigh alarmed, at this sudden apparition of a world rising, phantom-like out of the sea.

Presently an old man who had not yet spoken said:

"Stay! In that very island which appears before us now, as if to answer our question by recalling to my mind a long-vanished memory, I once

knew a wonderful example of constant love, of an enduring and supremely happy love. I will tell the story:

"Five years ago I traveled through Corsica. This semi-barbarous island is less known to us, and is in reality farther from us, than America; although, as to-day, it can sometimes be seen from the French coast.

"Picture to yourself a still chaotic world, a wilderness of mountains separated from one another by narrow valleys, through which rush swirling torrents; no plain, only immense waves of granite and huge undulations of the earth clothed with shrubs or with forests of lofty chestnut trees and pines. The soil is virgin, untilled, neglected, though here and there one comes across a village, looking like a pile of rocks at the summit of a hill. The island boasts neither agriculture, nor industry, nor art. Never does one see a piece of carved wood or a block of sculptured stone, or any testimony whatever to artistic taste on the part of the aborigines. It is this which strikes one most in this superb yet ungracious land; hereditary indifference toward any striving after the beautiful in form.

"Italy, where every place, full of works of art, is itself a work of art; where marble, wood, metals, and stones all testify to the genius of man; where the smallest object lying in ancient houses reveals a divine regard for grace of form—Italy is for us the well-beloved and sacred country, because she

shows us the greatness, the power, and the triumph of creative intelligence.

"And right opposite to her savage Corsica has remained what she was from the first. Her inhabitants dwell in their rough-hewn houses, indifferent to all that does not affect their actual existence or their family quarrels. And they retain both the faults and the virtues of primitive races. They are violent, vindictive, bloodthirsty; but they are also simple, hospitable, generous, opening their doors to the passer-by, and rewarding with absolute fidelity the least mark of sympathy.

"For a month I had been wandering in this magnificent island, with a feeling as if I had reached the end of the earth. No public houses, no roads. You reach by mule-paths those hamlets clinging to the mountainsides, where the roar of the torrent below assails the ear from morning till night. You knock at a door; you ask a night's shelter and enough food to last you till the following evening. And you sit down at the humble board, you sleep under the humble roof, and next morning you part from your host with a hearty handshake, when he has conducted you as far as the end of the village.

"One evening, after ten hours on the road, I came to a little dwelling standing by itself at the head of a narrow valley that debouched on the sea three miles away. The steep mountainsides, covered with shrubs, boulders, and lofty trees, were as two dark walls shutting in this cheerless ravine.

"Round the cottage were a few vines, a small garden, and one or two large chestnut-trees. Here were means of subsistence, at all events—almost a fortune, indeed, in this poverty-stricken land.

"The woman who received me was old, of austere aspect, and—wonderful to relate—very clean. The man, sitting on a rush-bottomed chair, rose in sign of welcome, and then sat down again without a word.

" 'Please excuse him,' said his companion. 'He's eighty-two years old, and quite deaf.'

"She spoke the French of France, to my surprise.

" 'You do not belong to Corsica?' I asked.

" 'No,' she said; 'we are from the Continent; but we have lived here fifty years.'

"I shuddered at the thought of fifty years spent in this God-forsaken spot, far from the haunts of men. An old shepherd joined us, and we all sat down to the single dish of which the dinner consisted—a thick soup in which potatoes, bacon, and cabbage had been boiled together.

"When the brief meal was over I sat before the door, a prey to that melancholy which sometimes seizes travelers in certain lonely places or on certain lonely evenings. At such times one feels that everything is at an end—one's life, nay, the very universe. One gets a sudden, fearful glimpse of the abject misery of life; the isolation of every human being from his fellows; the black, hopeless

solitude of the heart, which, nevertheless, cheats itself with dreams as long as life endures.

"The old woman joined me, and, possessed of that curiosity which survives in even the most placid and resigned of mortals, said:

" 'So you come from France?'

" 'Yes. I am on a pleasure-trip.'

" 'You are from Paris, perhaps?'

" 'No; I am from Nancy.'

"It seemed to me—but how or why I cannot tell—that some strange emotion worked in her, she repeated slowly:

" 'You are from Nancy?'

"At this juncture the man, impassible like all deaf people, appeared in the doorway. She continued:

" 'Never mind him; he can't hear.'

"Then, after a few moments' pause:

" 'Do you know the Nancy people?'

" 'Yes; nearly everybody.'

" 'The Sainte-Allaize family?'

" 'Yes, very well; they are friends of my father's.'

" 'What is your name?'

"I told her. She looked at me fixedly, then murmured in a pensive tone, occasioned by the stirring of long-forgotten memories:

" 'Yes, yes; I remember well. And what has become of the Brismares?'

" 'They are all dead.'

" 'Ah! And did you know the Sirmonts?'

" 'Yes; the last of them is a general.'

"Then she said, trembling with emotion and apparently moved by an irresistible impulse to confess, to tell all, to speak of those things which had hitherto remained locked in her own bosom, and of those people whose name affected her beyond words:

" 'Yes; Henri de Sirmont. I know him; he is my brother.'

"I raised my eyes to her, speechless with astonishment. And suddenly I remembered.

"Long ago there had been a great scandal in the Sirmont family. Suzanne de Sirmont, young, beautiful, and rich, eloped with a non-commissioned officer in the regiment of hussars that her father commanded.

"He was a handsome man of peasant birth, a man who looked well in his uniform—this soldier who had seduced his colonel's daughter. She had, no doubt, seen him, singled him out, and fallen in love with him, when her father's squadrons filed by. But how had she obtained speech with him? How had they managed to see each other and come to an understanding? No one ever knew.

"Such a catastrophe never had been dreamed of. One evening she and the soldier disappeared. Search was made, but the pair never were discovered. No news of them was ever received, and Suzanne de Sirmont was looked upon as dead.

"And now I had discovered her in this valley!

"Then I asked in my turn:

" 'Yes; I remember. You are Mademoiselle Suzanne?'

"She nodded assent, and tears fell from her eyes. Then, pointing to the old man framed in the doorway, she said:

" 'That is he.'

"And I saw that she still loved him, that she still looked at him with the eyes of affection.

" 'Have you been happy?' I asked.

" 'Oh, yes,' she replied, in a voice that came straight from her heart; 'very happy. He has made me perfectly happy. I never have had a moment's regret.'

"I looked at her, astonished at this exhibition of the power of love. Here was a rich girl who had followed a mere peasant. She had become a peasant herself. She had resigned herself to a life destitute of charm, of luxury, of refinement of any sort; she had accommodated herself to her husband's simple ways. And she still loved him. She had become a woman of the people, wearing a cap and a skirt of coarse stuff. She ate from an earthenware plate, on a rough wooden table, sitting on a rush-bottomed chair. Her dinner consisted of cabbage and potato soup. She lay on a hard mattress at his side.

"And she never had thought of anything but him! She had not regretted her jewels, her clothes,

all the elegances of her toilet, the softness of her chairs, the perfumed warmth of her curtained boudoir, the downy softness of her bed. She never had needed aught but himself; if he were there, she desired nothing more.

"When quite young she had forsaken her life, the world, and all those who had brought her up and loved her. She had come, alone with him, to this desolate valley. And he had been everything to her—her hopes, her dreams, her desires. He had filled her whole existence with contentment. She could not have been happier.

"And all night long, listening to the harsh breathing of the old soldier, extended on his pallet beside her who had followed him so far, I thought of their story, strange in its simplicity; of their happiness, so complete, yet made up of so little."

The narrator was silent. A woman said:

"But she had too lowly an ideal. Her needs were too simple, her instincts too primitive. She must have been a weak sort of creature."

Another said slowly:

"What matter? She was happy."

And on the far-off horizon Corsica melted into the gray night, was slowly swallowed up by the sea, withdrew that shadowy outline which had risen as if to tell the story of the humble lovers whom its rugged shores had sheltered.

THE MYSTERIOUS GROOM

ONE day an Austrian banker discovered that a serious robbery had occurred in his house. Jewels, a valuable watch set with diamonds, his wife's miniature in a frame set with brilliants, and a large sum in money, the whole value of which amounted to a hundred and fifty thousand florins, had been stolen from his room. He went to the chief of police to give notice of the robbery, but at the same time begged as a special favor that the investigation might be carried on as quietly and considerately as possible, as he declared that he had not the slightest ground for suspecting anybody in particular, and did not wish any innocent person to be accused.

"First, give me the names of all the persons who regularly go into your bedroom," the chief said.

"Nobody except my wife, my children, and Joseph, my valet; a man for whom I would answer as I would for myself."

"Then you think him absolutely incapable of committing such a deed?"

"I certainly do," replied the banker.

"Very well; then can you remember whether on the day on which you first missed the articles that have been stolen, or on any days immediately preceding it, anybody who was not a member of your household happened by chance to go to your bedroom?"

The banker reflected a moment and then said, with some hesitation:

"Nobody, absolutely nobody."

But the experienced official was struck by the banker's slight embarrassment and momentary flush, so he took his hand, and looking him straight in the face, he said:

"You are not quite frank with me; some one was with you, and you wish to conceal the fact from me. You must tell me everything."

"No, no; indeed no one was there."

"Then at present there is only one person on whom any suspicion can rest—and that is your valet."

"I will vouch for his honesty," the banker replied immediately.

"You may be mistaken, and I shall be compelled to question the man."

"May I beg you to do it with every possible consideration?"

"You may rely upon me for that."

An hour later the banker's valet was in the chief's private room. The official first scrutinized his man very closely, and then decided that a face

so honest and unembarrassed, with such quiet, steady eyes, could not possibly belong to a criminal.

"Do you know why I have sent for you?" he asked.

"No, Monsieur."

"A serious burglary has been committed in your master's house," the chief continued, "in his bedroom. Do you suspect anybody? Who has been in the room within the last few days?"

"No one but myself, except my master's family."

"Do you not see, my good fellow, that by saying this you throw suspicion on yourself?"

"Surely, Monsieur," the valet exclaimed, "you do not believe——"

"I must not believe anything; my duty is merely to investigate and to follow up any traces that I may discover," was the reply. "If you have been the only person to go into the room within the last few days I must hold you responsible."

"My master knows me——"

The chief of police shrugged his shoulders. "Your master has vouched for your honesty, but that is not enough for me. You are the only person on whom, at present, any suspicion rests, and therefore—sorry as I am to do so—I must have you arrested."

"If that is so," the man said, after some hesitation, "I prefer to speak the truth, for my good

name is worth more to me than my situation Some one was in my master's apartments yesterday."

"And this some one was——"

"A lady."

"A lady of his acquaintance?"

The valet did not answer for some time.

"It must come out," he said finally. "My master has met a woman—you understand, Monsieur, a pretty, blond woman; he seems to be very fond of her, and goes to see her, but secretly, of course, for if my mistress were to find it out there would be a terrible scene. This person was in the house yesterday."

"Were they alone?"

"I showed her in myself, and she was in the bedroom. I had to call my master out at once, as his confidential clerk wished to speak to him, and so she was in the room alone for about a quarter of an hour."

"What is her name?"

"Cecilia K——; she is a Hungarian." At the same time the valet gave him her address.

Then the chief of police sent for the banker, who, on being brought face-to-face with his valet, was obliged to acknowledge the truth of the facts the latter had alleged, painful as it was for him to do so; whereupon orders were given to take Cecilia K—— into custody.

In less than half an hour, however, the police offi-

cer who had been despatched for that purpose returned and said that she had left her apartments, and most likely the capital also, on the previous evening. The unfortunate banker was almost in despair. Not only had he been robbed of a hundred and fifty thousand florins, but at the same time he had lost the beautiful woman. He could not grasp the idea that a woman whom he had surrounded with Oriental luxury, whose most freakish whims he had gratified, and whose tyranny he had borne so patiently, could have deceived him so shamefully; and now he had a quarrel with his wife and an end of all domestic peace into the bargain.

The only thing the police could do was to send detectives after the lady, who had denounced herself by her flight, but it was of no use. In vain did the banker, in whose heart hatred and thirst for revenge had taken the place of love, implore the chief of police to employ every means to bring the beautiful criminal to justice, and in vain did he undertake to be responsible for all the costs of her prosecution, no matter how heavy they might be. Special police officers were assigned to try to discover her, but Cecilia K—— was so inconsiderate as not to allow herself to be caught.

Three years passed, and the unpleasant story appeared to have been forgotten. The banker had obtained his wife's pardon, and the police did not appear to trouble themselves about the beautiful Hungarian any more.

The scene now changes to London. A wealthy lady who created a great sensation in society, and who made many conquests both by her beauty and her behavior, was in need of a groom. Among the many applicants for the situation was a young man whose good looks and manners gave the impression that he must have been very well educated. This was a recommendation in the eyes of the lady's maid, and she took him immediately to her mistress' boudoir. When he entered he saw a beautiful, voluptuous-looking woman, twenty-five years of age at most, with large, bright eyes and blue-black hair, which seemed to increase the brilliance of her fair complexion. She was lying on a sofa. She looked at the young man, who had thick black hair and who lowered his glowing black eyes beneath her searching gaze, with evident satisfaction, and she seemed particularly taken with his slender, athletic build, and said half lazily and half proudly:

"What is your name?"

"Lajos Mariassi."

"A Hungarian?"

A strange look came into her eyes.

"Yes."

"How did you come here?"

"I am one of the many emigrants who have forfeited their country and their lives; and I, who come of a good family, and was an officer of the Honveds, must now go into service, and thank God if I find a mistress who is at the same time beautiful and an aristocrat like yourself, Madame."

Mademoiselle Zoë—that was the lovely woman's name—smiled, showing two rows of pearly teeth.

"I like your appearance," she said, "and I feel inclined to take you into my service, if you are satisfied with my terms."

"A lady's whim," her maid said to herself, when she noticed the glances that Mademoiselle Zoë gave her man-servant, "which will soon pass away." But that experienced person was mistaken this time.

Zoë was really in love, and the respect with which Lajos treated her put her into a very bad temper. One evening, when she intended to go to the Italian opera, she countermanded her carriage and refused to see a certain noble admirer, who was ready to throw himself at her feet, and she ordered her groom to be sent up to her.

"Lajos," she began, "I am not at all satisfied with you."

"Why, Madame?"

"I do not wish to have you about me any longer; here are your wages for three months. Leave the house immediately." And she began to walk up and down the room impatiently.

"I will obey you, Madame," the groom replied, "but I shall not take my wages."

"Why not?" she asked hastily.

"Because then I should be under your authority for three months," Lajos said, "and I intend to be free, this very moment, so that I may be able to tell you that I entered your service not for the sake of

your money, but because I love and adore you as a beautiful woman."

"You love me!" Zoë exclaimed. "Why did you not tell me sooner? I merely wished to banish you from my presence, because I love you and thought that you did not love me. But you shall smart for having tormented me so. Come to my feet immediately!"

The groom knelt before the lovely woman, and from that moment Lajos became her favorite. Of course he was not allowed to be jealous, as the young lord was still her official lover, and had the pleasure of paying her bills, and besides, there was a whole army of so-called "good friends," who were fortunate enough to obtain a smile now and then, and who, in return, had permission to present her with rare flowers, a parrot, or diamonds.

The more intimate Zoë became with Lajos, the more uncomfortable she felt when he looked at her, as he frequently did, with undisguised contempt. She was wholly under his influence and was afraid of him, and one day, while he was playing with her dark curls, he said jeeringly:

"It is usually said that contrasts attract each other, and yet you are as dark as I am."

She smiled and suddenly tore off a wig of black curls, and lo! the most charming, fair-haired woman was sitting beside Lajos, who looked at her attentively, but without any surprise.

He left the house about midnight in order to

look after the horses, as he said, and she retired. In two hours' time she was roused from her slumbers and saw a police inspector and two constables beside her bed.

"Whom do you want?" she cried.

"Cecilia K——"

"I am Mademoiselle Zoë."

"Oh, I know you!" the inspector said, with a smile; "be kind enough to take off your dark wig, and you will be Cecilia K——. I arrest you in the name of the law."

"Good heavens!" she stammered. "Lajos has betrayed me."

"You are mistaken, Madame," the inspector replied; "he has merely done his duty."

"What? Lajos—my adorer?"

"No—Lajos, the detective."

Cecilia rose from the bed, and the next moment sank fainting to the floor.

THE OPEN DOOR

"THE question of complaisant husbands," said Karl Massouligny, "is a difficult one. I have seen many kinds, and yet I am unable to give an opinion about any of them. I have often tried to determine whether they are blind, weak, or clairvoyant. I believe there are some that belong to each of these categories.

"We will pass quickly over the blind ones. They cannot correctly be called complaisant, since they do not know, but they are good creatures who cannot see farther than their noses. It is a curious and interesting thing to notice the ease with which men and women can be deceived. We are taken in by the slightest trick of those who surround us—of our children, our friends, our servants, our tradespeople. Humanity is credulous, and in order to discover deceit in others, we do not display one tenth of the finesse we use when we, in our turn, wish to deceive some one else.

"The clairvoyant husbands may be divided into three classes: those who have some interest, pecuniary, ambitious or otherwise, in their wives' hav-

ing a lover, or lovers. These ask only to preserve appearances as well as possible, and they are satisfied.

"Next come those who get angry. What a fine novel one could write about them!

"Finally come the weak ones—those who are afraid of scandal.

"There are also those who are powerless, or, rather, bored, who escape from conjugal duties from fear of ataxia or apoplexy, and who are satisfied to see a friend take these risks.

"But I have met a husband of a rare species, who guarded against the common accident in a strange and witty manner. In Paris I had made the acquaintance of an elegant, fashionable couple. The woman, brilliant, tall, slender, much courted, was supposed to have had many adventures. She pleased me with her wit, and I believe that I pleased her also. I courted her—a trial courtship to which she answered with evident provocations. Soon we arrived at the stage of tender glances, pressures of hands, all the little gallantries which precede the grand attack.

"Nevertheless, I hesitated. I believe that, as a rule, the greater number of society intrigues, however short they may be, are not worth the trouble they give us and the difficulties that may arise. I therefore mentally compared the advantages and disadvantages which I might expect, and thought I noticed that the husband suspected me.

"One evening at a ball, as I was saying tender things to the young woman in a little parlor leading from the hall where the dancing was going on, I noticed in a mirror the reflection of some one who was watching us. It was the husband. Our eyes met, and I saw him turn his head and walk away.

" 'Your husband is spying on us,' I murmured.

"She seemed dumbfounded, and repeated: 'My husband?'

" 'Yes, he has been watching us for some time.'

" 'Nonsense! Are you sure?' 'Quite sure.'

" 'How strange! He is usually very pleasant with all my friends.'

" 'Perhaps he has guessed that I love you!'

" 'Nonsense! You are not the first to pay attention to me. Every woman who is a little in view drags behind her a herd of admirers.'

" 'Yes. But I love you deeply.'

" 'Admitting that that is true, does a husband ever guess those things?'

" 'Then he is not jealous?'

" 'No—no!'

"She thought for an instant, and then continued: 'No. I do not think that I ever noticed any jealousy on his part.'

" 'Has he never—watched you?'

" 'No. As I said, he is always agreeable to my friends.'

"From that day my courting became much more

assiduous. The woman did not please me any more than before, but the probable jealousy of her husband tempted me greatly.

"As for her, I judged her coolly and clearly. She had a certain worldly charm, due to a quick, gay, amiable, and superficial mind, but no real, deep attraction. She was a little nervous, but quite elegant. How can I explain myself? She was . . . a decoration, but did not make a home.

"One day, after I had taken dinner with her, her husband said to me, just as I was leaving: 'My dear friend' (he now called me 'friend'), 'we soon leave for the country. It is a great pleasure for my wife and me to receive the friends we like. We should like to have you spend a month with us. It would be very kind of you to do so.'

"I was surprised, but I accepted.

"A month later I arrived at their estate of Vertcresson, in Touraine. They were waiting for me at the station, five miles from the château. There were three of them, she, the husband, and a gentleman unknown to me, the Comte de Morterade, to whom I was introduced. He appeared to be delighted to make my acqauintance, and the strangest ideas passed through my mind while we trotted along the beautiful road between two hedges. I was saying to myself: 'What can this mean? Here is a husband who cannot doubt that his wife and I are on more than friendly terms, and yet he invites me to his house, receives me like an old

friend, and seems to say: "Proceed, my friend, the way is clear!"

" 'Then I am introduced to a very pleasant gentleman, who seems already to have settled down in the house, and . . . and who is perhaps trying to escape from it, and who seems as pleased at my arrival as the husband himself.

" 'Is he some former lover who wishes to retire? One might think so. But, then, would these two men tacitly have come to one of those infamous little agreements so common in society? It is proposed to me that I should quietly enter into the association and take up the continuation of it. All hands and arms are held out to me. All doors and hearts are open to me.

" 'And what about her? An enigma. She cannot be ignorant of everything. However?—well —that is the point. I understand nothing.'

"The dinner was very gay and cordial. On leaving the table the husband and his friend began to play cards, while I went out on the porch to look at the moonlight with Madame. She seemed to be greatly moved by nature, and I judged that the moment for my happiness was near. That evening she was really delightful. The country had seemed to make her more tender. Her long, slender waist looked charming on this stone porch beside a large vase in which some flowers were growing. I felt like leading her out under the trees, throwing myself at her feet, and speaking to her words of love.

"Her husband's voice called: 'Louise?'

" 'Yes, dear.'

" 'You are forgetting the tea.'

" 'I will ring for it, my dear.'

"We returned to the house, and she served us with tea. When the two men had finished playing cards, they were visibly tired. I had to go to my room. I did not go to sleep till late, and then I slept badly.

"An excursion was decided upon for the following afternoon, and we went in an open carriage to visit some ruins. She and I were in the back of the vehicle and the two men were opposite us, riding backward. The conversation was sympathetic and agreeable. I am an orphan, and it seemed to me as if I had just found my family, I felt so much at home with them.

"Suddenly, as she had stretched out one foot between her husband's feet, he murmured reproachfully: 'Louise, please don't wear out your old shoes yourself. There is no reason for being neater in Paris than in the country.'

"I glanced down. She was indeed wearing much worn shoes, and I noticed that her stockings were not pulled up snugly.

"She blushed and hid her foot under her skirt. The friend was looking off in the distance, with an indifferent and unconcerned look.

"The husband offered me a cigar, which I accepted. For a few days it was impossible for me to be alone with her for two minutes; he was with us everywhere. He was most cordial to me.

"One morning he came to get me to take a walk before breakfast, and the conversation happened to turn to marriage. I spoke a little about solitude, and about how charming life may be made by a woman. Suddenly he interrupted me, saying: 'My friend, don't talk of things you know nothing about. A woman who has no more reason to love you, will not love you very long. All the little coquetries that make them so exquisite when they do not definitely belong to us cease as soon as they become ours. And then the respectable women —that is to say, our wives—are—are not—quite—they do not understand their business as wives. Do you understand?'

"He said no more, and I could not guess his thoughts.

"Two days after this conversation he called me to his room quite early in order to show me a collection of engravings. I sat in an easy-chair opposite the large double door that separated his apartment from his wife's, and behind this door I heard some one walking and moving, and I was thinking very little of the engravings, although I kept exclaiming: 'Oh, charming! delightful! exquisite!'

"Suddenly he said: 'I have a beautiful specimen in the next room. I will get it.'

"He went to the door quickly, and both sides opened as if for a theatrical effect.

"In a large room, all in disorder, in the midst of skirts, collars, and waists lying around on the

floor, stood a tall, thin creature. The lower part of her body was covered with an old, worn-out silk petticoat, which hung limply on her shapeless form, and she was standing in front of a mirror brushing some short, sparse blond hairs. Her elbows formed two sharp angles, and as she turned around in astonishment I saw under a common cotton chemise a regular boneyard of ribs, which in public were always hidden from the public gaze by well-arranged pads.

"The husband uttered a natural cry and came back, closing the doors and saying: 'Dear me! how stupid I am! Oh, how thoughtless! My wife never will forgive me for that!'

"I felt like thanking him. I departed three days later, after cordially shaking hands with the two men and kissing the lady's fingers; she bade me a cold good-by."

Karl Massouligny was silent. Some one asked: "But what was the friend?"

"I don't know. But he looked greatly distressed to see me leaving so soon!"

WIFE AND MISTRESS

IT was not only her long, silky curls, which covered her small, fairy-like head like a golden halo, nor her beautiful complexion, nor her mouth, which was like a delicate shell; nor was it her supreme innocence, shown by her sudden blushes and her somewhat awkward movements; nor was it her ingenuous questions, which had besieged and conquered Georges d'Hardermes' heart. He had a peculiar disposition, and any suspicion of a bond frightened him and put him to flight immediately. His unstable heart was ready to yield to any temptation, was incapable of any lasting attachment, and a succession of women had left no more impression on it than on the sea-sands that are constantly swept by the waves.

His was not the dream of a life of affection, of peace, the need of loving and of being loved, which a fast man so often feels between thirty and forty. His insurmountable weariness of that circle of pleasure in which he had moved, like a horse in a circus, the voids in his existence caused by the marriage of his bachelor friends, which in his selfish-

ness he looked upon as desertion, although he envied them, had at last induced him to listen to the prayers and advice of his old mother, and to marry Mademoiselle Suzanne de Gouvres. But the vision that he had had when he saw her playing with little children, covering them with kisses, and looking at them with ecstasy in her limpid eyes, and in hearing her talk of the pleasures and the anguish that those must feel who are mothers in the fullest sense of the word—the vision of a happy home, where a man feels that he is living again in others, of that home which is full of laughter and of song, and seems as if it were full of birds—was stronger than all.

As a matter of fact, he loved children as some men love animals, and he was interested in them as in some delightful spectacle; they attracted him.

He was very gentle, kind, and thoughtful with them, invented games for them, took them on his knees, was never tired of listening to their chatter, or of watching the development of their instincts, of their intellect, and of their little, delicate souls.

He used to go and sit in the Parc Monceau, and in the squares, to watch them playing and romping and prattling round him, and one day, as a joke, somebody, a jealous sweetheart, or some friends in joke, had sent him a splendid wet-nurse's cap, with long pink ribbons.

At first, he was under the influence of the charm that springs from the beginning of an intimacy,

from the first kisses, and devoted himself altogether to that amorous education which revealed a new life to him, as it were, and enchanted him.

He thought of nothing but of increasing the ardent love that his wife bestowed on him, and lived in a state of perpetual adoration. Suzanne's feelings, the metamorphosis of that virginal heart, which was beginning to glow with love, and which vibrated her passion, her modesty, her sensations, were all delicious surprises to him.

He felt that feverish pleasure of a traveler who has discovered some marvelous Eden and loses his head over it, and, at times, with a long, affectionate and proud look at her, which grew even warmer on looking into Suzanne's limpid blue eyes, he would put his arms round her waist, and pressing her to him so strongly that it hurt the young woman, he would exclaim:

"Oh! I am quite sure that nowhere on earth are there two persons who love each other as we do, and who are as happy as you and I are, my darling!"

Months of uninterrupted possession and enchantment succeeded each other without Georges altering, and without any lassitude mingling with the ardor of their love, or the fire of their affection dying out.

Then, however, suddenly he ceased to be happy, and, in spite of all his efforts to hide his invincible lowness of spirits, he became another man, restless,

being irritated at nothing, morose, and bored at everything and everywhere; whimsical, and never knowing what he wanted.

But certainly something was now poisoning that affection which formerly had been his delight, which was coming more and more between him and his wife every day, and was giving him a distaste for home.

By degrees, that vague suffering assumed a definite shape in his heart, got implanted and fixed there, like a nail. He had not attained his object, and he felt the weight of chains, understood that he never could get used to such an existence, that he could not love a woman who seemed incapable of becoming a mother, who lowered herself to the part of a lawful mistress, and who was not faithful to him.

Alas! To awake from such a dream, to say to himself that he was reduced to envying the good fortune of others, that he should never cover a little, curly, smiling head with kisses, where some striking likeness, some undecided gleams of growing intellect, fill a man with joy, but that he would be obliged to take the remainder of his journey in solitude, heartbroken, with nothing but old age around him; that no branch would again spring from the family tree, and that on his death-bed he should not have that last consolation of embracing his dear ones, for whom he struggled and made so many sacrifices, and who were sobbing with grief, but

that soon he should be the prey of indifferent and greedy heirs, who were discounting his approaching death like some valuable security!

Georges had not told Suzanne the feelings that were tormenting him, and took care that she should not see his state of unhappiness, and he did not worry her with trying questions that only end in a violent and distressing scene.

But she was too much of a woman, and she loved her husband too much, not to guess what was making him so gloomy and imperilling their love.

And every month came a fresh disappointment, and hope was again deferred. She, however, persisted in believing that their wish would be granted, and grew ill with this painful waiting, and refused to believe that she should never be a mother.

She would have looked upon it as a humiliation either to consult a medical man or to make a pilgrimage to some shrine, as so many women did, in their despair, and her proud, loyal, and loving nature at last rebelled against that hostility which showed itself in the angry outbursts, the painful silence, and the haughty coldness of the man who by a little kindness could have done anything he liked with her.

With death in her soul, she had a presentiment of the way of the cross which is an end of love, of all the bitterness which sooner or later would end in terrible quarrels and in words that would put an impassable barrier between them.

At last, one evening, when Georges d'Hardermes had lost his temper, had wounded her by equivocal words and bad jokes, Suzanne, who was very pale, and who was clutching the arms of her easy-chair convulsively, interrupted him with the accents of farewell in her melancholy voice:

"As you do not love me any more, why not tell me so at once, instead of wounding me like this by small, traitorous blows, and, above all, why continue to live together? You want your liberty, and I will give it you; you have your fortune, and I have mine. Let us separate without a scandal and without a lawsuit, so that, at least, a little friendship may survive our love. I shall leave Paris and live in the country with my mother. God is my witness, however, that I still love you, my poor Georges, as much as ever, and that I shall remain your wife, whether I am with you or separated from you!"

Georges hesitated for a few moments before replying, with an uneasy, sad look on his face, and then said, turning away his head:

"Yes, perhaps it will be best for both of us!"

They voluntarily broke their marriage contract, as she had heroically volunteered to do. She kept her resolution, exiled herself, buried herself in obscurity, accepted the trial with calm fortitude, and was as resigned as only faithful and devoted souls can be.

They wrote to each other, and she deluded her-

self, pursued the chimera that Georges would return to her, would call her back to his side, would escape from his former associates, would understand of what deep love he had voluntarily deprived himself, and would love her again as he had formerly loved her; and she resisted all the entreaties and the advice of her friends to cut such a false position short, and to institute a suit for divorce against her husband, as the issue would be certain.

He, at the end of a few months of solitude, of evanescent love affairs, when to beguile his loneliness a man passes from the arms of one woman to those of another, had set up a new home, and had tied himself to a woman whom he had accidentally met at a party of friends, and who had managed to please him and to amuse him.

His deserted wife was naturally not left in ignorance of the fact, and stifling her jealousy and her grief, she put on a smile, and thought that it would be the same with this one as it had been with all his other ephemeral mistresses, whom her husband had successively got rid of.

Was not that, after all, the best thing to bring about the issue which she longed and hoped for? Would not that doubtful passion, that close intimacy, certainly make Monsieur d'Hardermes compare the woman he possessed with the woman he had formerly had, and cause him to invoke that lost paradise and that heart full of forgiveness, of love and of goodness which had not forgotten him, but which would respond to his first appeal?

And that confidence of hers in a happier future, which neither all the proofs of that connection in which Monsieur d'Hardermes was becoming more and more involved, and which her friends so kindly furnished her with, nor the disdainful silence with which he treated all her gentle, indulgent letters could shake, had something touching, angelic in it, and reminded those who knew her well of certain passages in the *Lives of the Saints*.

At last, however, the sympathy of those who had so often tried to save the young woman, to cure her, and to open her eyes, became exhausted, and, left to herself, Suzanne proudly continued her dream, and absorbed herself in it.

Two long years had passed since she had lived with Monsieur d'Hardermes, and since he had put that hateful mistress in her place. She had lost all trace of them, knew nothing about him, and, in spite of everything, did not despair of seeing him again, and regaining her hold over him, who could tell when or by what miracle, but surely before those eyes which he had so loved were tired of shedding tears, and her fair hair, which he had so often covered with kisses, had grown white.

And the arrival of the postman every morning and evening made her start and shiver with nervousness.

One day, when she was going to Paris, Madame d'Hardermes found herself alone in the ladies' carriage, which she had entered in a hurry, with a peas-

ant woman in her Sunday best, who had on her lap a child with pretty pink cheeks and rosy lips, like the dimpled cherubs that one sees in pictures of the Assumption of the Virgin.

The nurse said affectionate words to the child in a coaxing voice, wrapped it up in the folds of her large cloak, sometimes gave it a noisy, hearty kiss, and it beat the air with its little hands, and crowed and laughed with such pretty, attractive, babyish movements that Suzanne could not help exclaiming: "Oh! the pretty little thing!" and taking it into her arms.

At first the child was surprised at the strange face, and for a moment seemed as if it were going to cry; but it became reassured immediately, smiled at the stranger who looked at it so kindly, inhaled the delicate scent of the iris in the bodice of her dress, with dilated nostrils, and cuddled up against her.

The two women began to talk, and without knowing why, Madame d'Hardermes questioned the nurse, asked her where she came from, and where she was taking the little thing.

The other, rather flattered that Suzanne admired the child and took an interest in it, replied, somewhat vaingloriously, that she lived at Bois-le-Roy, and that her husband was a wagoner.

The child had been intrusted to their care by some people in Paris, who appeared very happy and extremely well off. And the nurse added in a drawling voice:

"Perhaps, Madame, you know my master and mistress, Monsieur and Madame d'Hardermes?"

Suzanne started with surprise and grief, and grew as pale as if all her blood were streaming from some wound, and thinking that she had not heard correctly, with a fixed look and trembling lips, she said, slowly, as if every word hurt her throat:

"You said, Monsieur and Madame d'Hardermes?"

"Yes; do you know them?"

"I, yes—formerly—but it was a long time ago."

She could scarcely speak, and was as pale as death; she hardly knew what she was saying, with her eyes on this pretty child, of which Georges must be so fond.

She saw them, as if in a window that had suddenly been opened, where everything had been dark before, with their arms round each other, and radiant with happiness, with that fair head, that divine dawn, the living, smiling proof of their love, between them.

They would never leave each other; they were already almost as good as married, and were robbing her of the name which she had defended and guarded as a sacred deposit.

She never could break such bonds. It was a shipwreck where nothing could survive, and where the waves did not even drift some shapeless waif and stray ashore.

And great tears rolled down her cheeks, one by one, and wetted her veil.

The train stopped at the station, and the nurse scarcely liked to ask Suzanne for the child, who was holding it against her heaving bosom, and kissing it as if she intended to smother it, and she said:

"I suppose the baby reminds you of one you have lost, my poor, dear lady, but the loss can be repaired at your age, surely; a second is as good as a first, and if one does not do one's self justice——"

Madame d'Hardermes returned the child to her, hurried out straight ahead of her, like a hunted animal, and threw herself into the first cab that she saw.

She sued for a divorce, and obtained it.

THE FATHERS

I HAVE a friend whose name is Jean de Valnoix, and I visit him from time to time. He lives in a little cottage in the woods on the banks of a river. He retired from Paris after leading a gay life for fifteen years. Suddenly he felt that he had had enough of pleasures, dinners, men, women, cards, everything; and he went to live in this little place, where he had been born.

Two or three of us who are his friends, go, from time to time, to spend a few weeks with him. He is certainly delighted to see us when we arrive, and glad to be alone again when we leave.

I went to visit him last week, and he received me with open arms. We spent hours at a time together, but sometimes we were alone. Usually he reads and I work during the daytime, and every evening we talk until midnight.

Last Tuesday, after a very hot day, toward nine o'clock in the evening, we were sitting by the river and watching the water flow at our feet; we were exchanging very vague ideas about the stars that appeared to be bathing in the current and seemed

to swim along ahead of us. Our ideas were vague, confused, and brief, for our minds are somewhat limited, weak and powerless. I was expatiating on the so-called sun, which sets in the Great Bear. One can see it only on very clear nights, it is so pale. When the sky is the least bit clouded it disappears. We were thinking of the creatures that people these worlds, of their possible forms, of their unthinkable faculties and unknown organs, of the animals and plants of every kind, of many things that man's dreams can barely touch.

Suddenly a voice called from the distance: "Monsieur, Monsieur!"

"Here I am, Baptiste," Jean answered.

When the servant had found us he announced: "Monsieur's gypsy has come."

My friend burst out laughing, a thing which he rarely does, then he asked: "Is to-day the nineteenth of July?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Very well. Tell her to wait for me. Give her some supper. I'll see her in ten minutes."

When the man had disappeared my friend took me by the arm, saying: "Let us walk along slowly, while I tell you this story.

"Seven years ago, when I arrived here, I went out one evening to take a walk in the forest. It was a beautiful day, like to-day, and I was walking along slowly under the great trees, looking at the stars through the leaves, enjoying the quiet restfulness of night and the forest.

"I had just left Paris forever. I was tired—more disgusted than I can say by all the foolish, vile, and nasty things which I had seen and in which I had participated for fifteen years.

"I walked a long distance in this deep forest, following a path which leads to the village of Crouzille, about eight miles from here.

"Suddenly my dog, a great St. Bernard, which never left me, stopped short and began to growl. I thought that perhaps a fox, a wolf, or a boar might be in the neighborhood; I advanced softly on tiptoe, in order to make no noise, but suddenly I heard mournful, human cries, piercing yet muffled. I thought that surely someone was committing murder, and I rushed forward, taking a tight grip on my heavy oak cane, which was indeed a club.

"I drew nearer to the moans, which now became more distinct, but still were strangely muffled. One might have thought that they were coming from some house, perhaps from the hut of a charcoal burner. Three feet ahead of me Bock was running, stopping, barking, starting again, highly excited, and always growling. Suddenly another dog, a big black one with snapping eyes, barred our progress. I could clearly see his white fangs, which seemed to be shining in his mouth.

"I ran toward him with uplifted cane, but Bock had already jumped, and the two beasts were rolling around the ground with their teeth buried in each other. I went past them and almost bumped

into a horse lying in the road. As I stopped, in surprise, to examine the animal, I saw in front of me a wagon, or, rather a rolling house, such as are inhabited by gypsies and the traveling merchants who go from fair to fair.

"The cries were coming from there, frightful and continuous. As the door opened from the other side I turned around this vehicle and rushed up the three wooden steps, ready to jump on the malefactor.

"What I saw seemed so strange to me that I could at first understand nothing. A man was kneeling, and seemed to be praying, while in the bed something impossible to recognize, a half-naked creature, whose face I could not see, was moving, twisting about, and howling. It was a woman in labor.

"As soon as I understood the kind of accident that was the cause of these cries, I made my presence known, and the man, wild with grief, begged me to save him, to save her, promising to me an unbelievable thankfulness. I never had seen a birth; I never had helped a female creature, woman, dog, or cat, in such a condition, and I said so as I foolishly watched this thing screaming so in the bed.

"Then I gathered my wits again, and I asked the grief-stricken man why he did not go to the next village. He said that his horse had stepped into a rut and had broken part of his leg.

"'Well, my man,' I exclaimed, 'there are two of us now, and we will drag your wife to my house.'

"But the howling dogs forced us to go outside, and we had to separate them by beating them with our sticks, at the risk of killing them. Then the idea struck me to harness them with us, one on the right and the other on the left, in order to help us. In ten minutes everything was ready, and the wagon started forward slowly, shaking the poor, suffering woman each time it bumped over a rut.

"Such a road, my friend! We were going along, panting, perspiring, slipping, and falling, while our poor dogs puffed along beside us.

"It took three hours to reach the cottage. When we arrived before the door the cries from the wagon had ceased, and mother and child were doing well.

"They were put to bed, and then I had a horse harnessed in order to go for a physician, while the man, an inhabitant of Marseilles, reassured, consoled, boasting, was stuffing himself with food and getting drunk in order to celebrate this happy birth.

"It was a girl.

"I kept these people with me for a week. The mother, Mademoiselle Elmire, was an extraordinarily gifted clairvoyante, who promised me an interminable life and countless joys.

"The following year, at exactly the same date, toward nightfall, the servant who has just called

me came to me in the smoking-room after dinner and said: 'It's the gypsy of last year who has come to thank Monsieur.'

"I had her come in the house, and I was dumbfounded as I saw beside her a tall blond fellow, a man from the North, who bowed and spoke to me as chief of the community. He had heard of my kindness for Mademoiselle Elmire, and he had not wished to let this anniversary go by without bringing to me their thanks and a testimony of their gratitude.

"I gave them supper in the kitchen, and offered them my hospitality for the night. They departed the following day.

"Every year the woman returns at the same date with the child, a fine little girl, and a new man each time. One man only, a fellow from Auvergne, came two years in succession. The little girl calls them all 'Papa,' just as one says 'Monsieur' with us."

We were approaching the cottage, and we could barely distinguish three shadows standing on the porch, waiting for us. The tallest one took a few steps forward, made a low bow, and said: 'Monsieur le Comte, we have come to-day in recognition of our gratefulness."

He was a Belgian!

After him, the little one spoke in the shrill, singing voice which children use when they recite a composition.

I assumed ignorance, and took Mademoiselle Elmire aside, and, after a few questions, I asked her: "Is that the father of your child?"

"Oh, no, Monsieur."

"Is the father dead?"

"Oh, no, Monsieur. We still see each other from time to time. He is a gendarme."

"What! then it wasn't the fellow from Marseilles who was there at the birth?"

"Oh, no, Monsieur. That was a rascal who stole all my savings."

"And the gendarme, the real father, does he know his child?"

"Oh, yes, Monsieur, and he loves her very much; but he can't take care of her because he has other children by his wife."

THE MOUNTAIN INN

THE Inn of Schwarenbach resembles in appearance all the wooden hostelries of the High Alps situated at the foot of glaciers in the barren rocky gorges that intersect the summits of the mountains, and serves as a resting-place for travelers crossing the Gemmi Pass.

It remains open for six months in the year, and is inhabited by the family of Jean Hauser; then, as soon as the snow begins to fall, filling the valley so as to make the road down to Loëche impassable, the father and his three sons go away, and leave the house in charge of the old guide, Gaspard Hari, with the young guide, Ulrich Kunsi, and Sam, the great mountain dog.

The two men and the dog remain till the spring in their snowy prison, with nothing before their eyes except the immense white slopes of the Balmhorn, surrounded by white, glistening summits, and are shut in, blocked up, and buried by the snow which rises around them, and which envelops, binds, and crushes the little house; it lies piled on the roof, covers the windows and blocks the door.

It was the day on which the Hauser family were about to return to Loëche, as winter was approaching, and the descent was becoming dangerous. Three mules set out first, laden with baggage and led by the three sons. Then the mother, Jeanne Hauser, and her daughter Louise mounted a fourth mule, and set off in their turn, the father following them, accompanied by the two men in charge, who were to escort the family as far as the brow of the descent. First they passed round the small lake, which was now frozen over, at the bottom of the mass of rocks which stretched in front of the inn, and then they followed the valley, which was dominated on all sides by the snow-covered summits.

A ray of sunlight fell into that little white, glistening, frozen desert, and illuminated it with a cold and dazzling flame; no living thing appeared among this ocean of mountains; there was no motion in this immeasurable solitude, and no noise disturbed the profound silence.

By degrees the young guide, Ulrich Kunsi, a tall, long-legged Swiss, left old Hauser and Gaspard behind, so as to overtake the mule that bore the two women. The younger one looked at him as he approached, and appeared to be summoning him with her sad eyes. She was a young, fair-haired little peasant girl, whose milk-white cheeks and pale hair looked as if they had lost their color by her long stay amid the ice. When he had

overtaken the animal she was riding, he put his hand on the crupper, and relaxed his speed. Mother Hauser began to talk to him, enumerating with the minutest details all that he would have to attend to during the winter. It was the first time that he was to stay up there, while old Hari had already spent fourteen winters amid the snow, at the Inn of Schwarenbach.

Ulrich Kunsi listened, without appearing to understand, and looked continually at the girl. From time to time he replied: "Yes, Madame Hauser;" but his thoughts seemed far away, and his calm features remained unmoved.

They reached Lake Daube, whose broad, frozen surface extended to the end of the valley. On the right one saw the black, pointed rocky summits of the Daubenhorn beside the enormous moraines of the Lömmern glacier, above which rose the Wildstrubel. As they approached the Gemmi Pass, where the descent of Loëche begins, they suddenly beheld the immense horizon of the Alps of the Valais, from which the broad valley of the Rhône separated them.

In the distance was a group of white, unequal, flat or pointed mountain summits, which glistened in the sun; the Mischabel with its two peaks, the huge group of the Weisshorn, the heavy Brunegghorn, the lofty and formidable pyramid of Mount Cervin, that slayer of men, and the Dent-Blanche, that monstrous coquette.

Beneath them, in a tremendous hole, at the bottom of a terrific abyss, they perceived Loëche, where houses looked like grains of sand which had been thrown into that enormous crevasse, which is ended and closed by the Gemmi, and which opens, far below, on the Rhône.

The mule stopped at the edge of the path, which winds and turns continually, doubling backward, then fantastically and strangely, along the side of the mountain, as far as the almost invisible little village at its feet. The women jumped down into the snow, and the two old men joined them. "Well," Father Hauser said, "good-bye, and keep up your spirits till next year, my friends," and old Hari replied: "Till next year."

They embraced each other, and then Madame Hauser in her turn offered her cheek, and the girl did the same.

When Ulrich Kunsi's turn came, he whispered in Louise's ear: "Do not forget those up yonder," and she replied, "No," in a voice so low that he guessed what she had said without hearing it. "Well, adieu," Jean Hauser repeated, "and don't fall ill." And going before the two women, he began the descent. Soon all three disappeared at the first turn in the road, while the two men returned to the Inn at Schwarenbach.

They walked slowly, side by side, without speaking. It was over, and they would be alone together four or five months. Then Gaspard Hari began

to relate his life last winter. He had remained with Michael Canol, who was too old now to endure it; for an accident might happen during that long solitude. They had not been dull, however; the only thing to do was to make up one's mind to it from the first, and in the end one would find plenty of distraction, games, and other means of passing away the time.

Ulrich Kunsi listened to him with his eyes on the ground, for in his thoughts he was following those who were descending to the village. They soon came in sight of the inn, which was, however, hardly visible, so small did it look, a black speck at the foot of that enormous billow of snow, and when they opened the door, Sam, the great curly dog, began to frisk round them.

"Come, my boy," old Gaspard said, "we have no women now, so we must get our own dinner ready. Go and peel the potatoes." Both sat down on wooden stools, and began to put the bread into the soup.

The next morning seemed very long to Kunsi. Old Hari smoked and spat on the hearth, while the young man looked out of the window at the snow-covered mountain opposite the house.

In the afternoon he went out, and, going over yesterday's ground again, he looked for the traces of the mule that had carried the two women; then, when he had reached the Gemmi Pass, he laid himself down on his stomach and looked at Loëche.

The village, in its rocky pit, was not yet buried under the snow, from which it was sheltered by the pine woods which protected it on all sides. Its low houses looked like paving-stones in a large meadow, from above. Hauser's little daughter was there now, in one of those gray-colored houses. In which? Ulrich Kunsi was too far away to be able to make them out separately. How he would have liked to go down, while he was yet able!

But the sun had disappeared behind the lofty crest of the Wildstrubel, and the young man returned to the chalet. Daddy Hari was smoking, and when he saw his mate come in, he proposed a game of cards to him, and they sat down opposite each other, on either side of the table. They played for a long time, a simple game called *brisque,* then they had supper and went to bed.

The following days were like the first, bright and cold, without any fresh snow. Old Gaspard spent his afternoons in watching the eagles and other rare birds which ventured on those frozen heights, while Ulrich returned regularly to the Gemmi Pass to look at the village. They played cards, dice, or dominoes, and lost and won a trifle, just to create an interest in the game.

One morning Hari, who was up first, called his companion. A moving, deep, and light cloud of white spray was falling on them noiselessly, and was by degrees burying them under a thick, heavy coverlet of foam. That lasted four days and four

nights. It was necessary to free the door and the windows, to dig out a passage, and to cut steps to get over this frozen powder, which a twelve hours' frost had made as hard as the granite of the moraines.

They lived like prisoners, and did not venture outside their abode. They had divided their duties, which they performed regularly. Ulrich Kunsi undertook the scouring, washing, and everything that belonged to cleanliness. He also chopped all the wood, while Gaspard Hari did the cooking and attended to the fire. Their regular and monotonous work was interrupted by long games at cards or dice, and they never quarreled, but were always calm and placid. They were never even impatient or ill-humored, nor did they ever use hard words, for they had laid in a stock of patience for their wintering on the top of the mountain.

Sometimes old Gaspard took his rifle and went after chamois, and occasionally he killed one. Then there was a feast in the Inn at Schwarenbach, and they reveled in fresh meat. One morning he went out as usual. The thermometer outside marked eighteen degrees of frost, and as the sun had not yet risen, the hunter hoped to surprise the animals at the approaches to the Wildstrubel, and Ulrich, being alone, remained in bed until ten o'clock. He was of a sleepy nature, but he would not have dared to give way like that to his inclination in the presence of the old guide, who was ever an early riser.

He breakfasted leisurely with Sam, who also spent his days and nights in sleeping in front of the fire; then he felt low-spirited and even frightened at the solitude, and was seized by a longing for his daily game of cards, as one is by the craving of a confirmed habit, and so he went out to meet his companion, who was to return at four o'clock.

The snow had leveled the whole deep valley, filled up the crevasses, obliterated all signs of the two lakes, and covered the rocks, so that between the high summits there was nothing but an immense, white, regular, dazzling, and frozen surface. For three weeks Ulrich had not been to the edge of the precipice from which he had looked down on the village, and he wished to go there before climbing the slopes that led to Wildstrubel. Loëche was now also covered by the snow, and the houses could hardly be distinguished, covered as they were by that white cloak.

Turning to the right, he reached the Loemmern glacier. He went on with a mountaineer's long strides, striking the snow, which was as hard as a rock, with his iron-pointed stick, and with his piercing eyes he looked for the little black, moving speck in the distance, on that enormous, white expanse.

When he reached the end of the glacier he stopped and asked himself whether the old man had taken that road, and then he began to walk along the moraines with rapid and uneasy steps. The day was declining; the snow was assuming a

rosy tint, and a dry, freezing wind blew in rough gusts over its crystal surface. Ulrich uttered a long, shrill, vibrating call; his voice sped through the deathlike silence in which the mountains were sleeping; it reached the distance, over profound and motionless waves of glacial foam, like the cry of a bird over the waves of the sea; then it died away and nothing answered him.

He began to walk again. The sun had sunk yonder behind the mountain tops, which were still purple with the reflection from the sky; but the depths of the valley were becoming gray, and suddenly the young man felt frightened. It seemed to him as if the silence, the cold, the solitude, the winter death of these mountains were taking possession of him, were going to stop and freeze his blood, to make his limbs grow stiff, and to turn him into a motionless and frozen object; and he set off running, fleeing toward his dwelling. The old man, he thought, would have returned during his absence. He had taken another road; he would, no doubt, be sitting before the fire, with a dead chamois at his feet.

He soon came in sight of the inn, but no smoke rose from it. Ulrich walked faster and opened the door; Sam ran up to him to greet him, but Gaspard Hari had not returned. Kunsi, in his alarm, turned round suddenly, as if he had expected to find his comrade hidden in a corner. Then he relighted the fire and made the soup, hoping every moment

to see the old man come in. From time to time he went out to see whether he were not coming. It was quite night now, that wan, livid night of the mountains, lighted by the crescent moon, yellow and thin, just disappearing behind the mountain tops.

Then the young man went in and sat down to warm his hands and his feet, while he pictured to himself every possible accident. Gaspard might have broken a leg, have fallen into a crevasse, taken a false step and dislocated his ankle. Perhaps, he was lying on the snow, overcome and stiff with the cold, in agony of mind, lost and perhaps shouting for help, calling with all his might, in the silence of the night.

But where? The mountain was so vast, so rugged, so dangerous in places, especially at that time of the year, that it would have required ten or twenty guides to walk for a week in all directions, to find a man in that immense space. Ulrich Kunsi, however, made up his mind to set out with Sam, if Gaspard did not return by one in the morning; and he made his preparations.

He put provisions for two days into a bag, took his steel climbing-irons, tied a long, thin, strong rope round his waist, and looked to see that his iron-shod stick and his axe, which served to cut steps in the ice, were in order. Then he waited. The fire was burning on the hearth, the great dog was snoring in front of it, and the clock was ticking as regularly as a heart beating, in its resounding wooden case.

He waited, with his ears on the alert for distant sounds, and he shivered when the wind blew against the roof and the walls. It struck twelve, and he trembled. Then, frightened and shivering, he put some water on the fire, so that he might have some hot coffee before starting, and when the clock struck one he got up, woke Sam, opened the door, and went off in the direction of the Wildstrubel. For five hours he mounted, scaling the rocks by means of his climbing-irons, cutting into the ice, advancing continually, and occasionally hauling up the dog, which remained below at the foot of some slope that was too steep for him, by means of the rope. It was about six o'clock when he reached one of the summits to which old Gaspard often came after chamois, and he waited till daylight.

The sky was growing pale overhead, and a strange light, springing nobody could tell whence, suddenly illuminated the immense ocean of pale mountain summits, which extended for a hundred leagues around him. One might have said that this vague brightness arose from the snow itself, and spread abroad in space. By degrees the highest distant summits assumed a delicate, pink flesh color, and the red sun appeared behind the ponderous giants of the Bernese Alps.

Ulrich Kunsi set off again, walking like a hunter, bent over, looking for tracks, and saying to his dog: "Seek, old fellow, seek!"

He was descending the mountain now, scanning

the depths closely, and from time to time shouting, uttering a loud, prolonged cry, which soon died away in that silent vastness. Then he put his ear to the ground, to listen; he thought he could distinguish a voice, and he began to run, and shouted again; but he heard nothing more and sat down, exhausted and in despair. Toward midday he breakfasted and gave Sam, as tired as himself, something to eat also, and then he resumed his search.

When evening came he was still walking, and he had walked more than thirty miles over the mountains. As he was too far away to return home, and too tired to drag himself along any further, he dug a hole in the snow and crouched in it with his dog, under a blanket which he had brought with him. And the man and the dog lay side by side, trying to keep warm, but frozen to the marrow, nevertheless. Ulrich hardly slept, his mind haunted by visions and his limbs shaking with cold.

Day was breaking when he got up. His legs were as stiff as iron bars, and his spirits so low that he was ready to cry with anguish, while his heart was throbbing so that he almost fell over with agitation when he thought he heard a sound.

Suddenly he imagined that he, too, was about to die of cold in the midst of this vast solitude, and the terror of such a death roused his energies and gave him renewed vigor. He was descending toward the inn, falling down and getting up again, and followed at a distance by Sam, who was limping on

three legs, and they did not reach Schwarenbach until four o'clock in the afternoon. The house was empty, and the young man made a fire, had something to eat, and went to sleep, so exhausted that he did not think of anything more.

He slept for a long time, for a very long time, an irresistible sleep. But suddenly a voice, a cry, a name, "Ulrich" aroused him from his profound torpor, and made him sit up in bed. Had he been dreaming? Was it one of those strange appeals that cross the dreams of disquieted minds? No, he heard it still, that reverberating cry—which had entered his ears and remained in his flesh—to the tips of his sinewy fingers. Certainly, somebody had cried out, and called: "Ulrich!" Somebody was there, near the house, there could be no doubt of that, and he opened the door and shouted: "Is it you, Gaspard?" with all the strength of his lungs. But there was no reply, no murmur, no groan, nothing. It was quite dark, and the snow looked wan.

The wind had risen, that icy wind that cracks the rocks, and leaves nothing alive on those deserted heights, and it came in sudden guests, which were more parching and more deadly than the burning wind of the desert, and again Ulrich shouted: "Gaspard! Gaspard! Gaspard!" He waited again. Everything was silent on the mountain! Then he shook with terror and with a bound he was inside the inn; he shut and bolted the door, and fell into a chair trembling all over, for he felt certain that

his comrade had called him at the moment he was expiring.

He was sure of that, as sure as one is of being alive, or of eating a piece of bread. Old Gaspard Hari had been dying for two days and three nights somewhere, in some hole, in one of those deep, untrodden ravines whose whiteness is more sinister than subterranean darkness. He had been dying for two days and three nights, and he had just then died, thinking of his comrade. His soul, almost before it was released, had taken its flight to the inn where Ulrich was sleeping, and it had called him by that terrible and mysterious power which the spirits of the dead have to haunt the living. That voiceless soul had cried to the weary soul of the sleeper; it had uttered its last farewell, or its reproach, or its curse on the man who had not searched carefully enough.

Ulrich felt that it was there, quite close to him, behind the wall, behind the door which he had just fastened. It was wandering about, like a night bird which lightly touches a lighted window with his wings, and the terrified young man was ready to scream with horror. He longed to run away, but did not dare to go out; he did not dare, and he should never dare to do it in the future, for that phantom would remain there day and night, round the inn, so long as the old man's body was not recovered and had not been deposited in the consecrated earth of a churchyard.

When it was daylight Kunsi recovered some of his courage at the return of the bright sun. He prepared his meal, gave his dog some food, and then remained motionless on a chair, tortured at heart as he thought of the old man lying on the snow, and then, as soon as night once more covered the mountains, new terrors assailed him. He now walked up and down the dark kitchen, which was barely lighted by the flame of one candle, and he walked from one end of it to the other with great strides, listening, listening whether the terrible cry of the other night would again break the dreary silence outside. He felt himself a lone, unhappy man, as no man had ever been alone before! He was alone in this immense desert of snow, alone five thousand feet above the inhabited earth, above human habitations, above that stirring, noisy, palpitating life, alone under an icy sky! A mad longing impelled him to run away, no matter where, to get down to Loëche by flinging himself over the precipice; but he did not even dare to open the door, as he felt sure that the other, the dead man, would bar his road, so that he might not be obliged to remain up there alone.

Toward midnight, tired with walking, worn out by grief and fear, he at last fell into a doze in his chair, for he was as afraid of his bed as one is of a haunted spot. But suddenly the strident cry of the other evening pierced his ears, and it was so shrill that Ulrich stretched out his arms to repulse

the spectre, and he fell backward with his chair.

Sam, who was awakened by the noise, began to howl as frightened dogs do howl, and he walked all about the house trying to find out where the danger came from. When he got to the door, he sniffed beneath it, smelling vigorously, with his coat bristling and his tail stiff, while he growled angrily. Kunsi, terrified, jumped up, and, holding his chair by one leg, he cried: "Don't come in, don't come in, or I shall kill you." And the dog, excited by this threat, barked angrily at that invisible enemy who defied his master's voice. By degrees, however, he quieted down and came back and stretched himself in front of the fire, but he was uneasy, kept his head up, and growled between his teeth.

Ulrich, in turn, recovered his senses, but as he felt faint with terror, he went and got a bottle of brandy out of the sideboard, and he drank off several glasses, one after another, at a gulp. His ideas became vague, his courage revived, and a feverish glow ran through his veins.

He ate hardly anything the next day, and limited himself to alcohol, and so he lived for several days, like a drunken brute. As soon as he thought of Gaspard Hari, he began to drink again, and went on drinking until he fell to the ground, overcome by intoxication. There he remained lying on his face, dead drunk, his limbs benumbed, and snoring loudly. But hardly had he digested the maddening and burning liquor when the same cry, "Ulrich!" woke

him like a bullet piercing his brain, and he got up, still staggering, stretching out his hands to save himself from falling, and calling to Sam to help him. And the dog, which appeared to be going mad like his master, rushed to the door, scratched it with his claws, and gnawed it with his long white teeth, while the young man, with his head thrown back, drank the brandy in draughts, as if it had been cold water, so that it might by and by send his thoughts, his frantic terror, and his memory to sleep again.

In three weeks he had consumed all his stock of ardent spirits. But his continual drunkenness only lulled his terror, which awoke more furiously than ever as soon as it was impossible for him to calm it. His fixed idea then, which had been intensified by a month of drunkenness, and which was continually increasing in his absolute solitude, penetrated him like a gimlet. He now walked about his house like a wild beast in its cage, putting his ear to the door to listen if the other were there, and defying him through the wall. Then, as soon as he dozed, overcome by fatigue, he heard the voice which made him leap to his feet.

At last one night, as cowards do when driven to extremities, he sprang to the door and opened it, to see who was calling him, and to force him to keep quiet, but such a gust of cold wind blew into his face that it chilled him to the bone, and he closed and bolted the door again immediately, without

noticing that Sam had rushed out. Then, as he was shivering with cold, he threw some wood on the fire, and sat down in front of it to warm himself, but suddenly he started, for somebody was scratching at the wall, and crying. In desperation he called out: "Go away!" but was answered by another long, sorrowful wail.

Then all his remaining senses forsook him from sheer fright. He repeated: "Go away!" and turned round to try to find some corner in which to hide, while the other creature went round the house still crying and rubbing against the wall. Ulrich went to the oak sideboard, which was full of plates and dishes and of provisions, and, lifting it up with superhuman strength, he dragged it to the door, so as to form a barricade. Then, piling up all the rest of the furniture, the mattresses and chairs, he stopped up the windows as one does when assailed by an enemy.

But the thing outside now uttered long, plaintive, mournful groans, to which the young man replied by similar groans, and thus days and nights passed, without their ceasing to howl at each other. The one was continually walking round the house, and scraped the walls with his nails so vigorously that it seemed as if he wished to destroy them, while the other, inside, followed all his movements, stooping down, and holding his ear to the walls, and replying to all his appeals with terrible cries. One evening, however, Ulrich heard nothing more, and

he sat down, so overcome by fatigue, that he went to sleep immediately, and awoke in the morning without a thought, without any recollection of what had happened, just as if his head had been emptied during his heavy sleep, but he felt hungry, and he ate.

The winter was over, and the Gemmi Pass was passable again, so the Hauser family set off to return to their inn. As soon as they had reached the top of the ascent, the women mounted their mule, and spoke about the two men they would meet again shortly. They were, indeed, rather surprised that neither of them had come down a few days before, as soon as the road was open, in order to tell them all about their long winter sojourn. At last, however, they saw the inn, still covered with snow, like a quilt. The door and the window were closed, but a little smoke was coming out of the chimney, which reassured old Hauser; on going up to the door, however, he saw the skeleton of an animal which had been torn to pieces by the eagles, a large skeleton lying on its side.

They all looked close at it, and the mother said: "That must be Sam," and then she shouted: "Hi! Gaspard!" A cry from the interior of the house answered her, such a sharp cry that one might have thought some animal had uttered it. Old Hauser repeated: "Hi! Gaspard!" and they heard another cry, similar to the first.

Then the three men, the father and the two sons,

tried to open the door, but it resisted their efforts. From the empty cow-stall they took a beam to serve as a battering-ram, and hurled it against the door with all their might. The wood gave way, and the boards flew into splinters; then the house was shaken by a loud voice, and inside, behind the sideboard which was overturned, they saw a man standing upright, with his hair falling on his shoulders, and a beard descending to his breast, with shining eyes and nothing but rags to cover him. They did not recognize him, but Louise Hauser exclaimed: "It is Ulrich, mother!" And her mother declared that it was Ulrich, although his hair was white.

He allowed them to go up to him, and to touch him, but he did not reply to any of their questions, and they were obliged to take him to Loëche, where the doctors found that he was mad, and nobody ever found out what had become of his companion.

Little Louise Hauser nearly died that summer of decline, which the physicians attributed to the cold air of the mountains.

MADAME HUSSON'S ROSIER

WE had just left Gisors, where I awoke when the name of the town was called out by the guards, and I was dozing off again when a terrific shock threw me forward upon a large lady who sat opposite me.

One of the wheels of the engine had broken, and the engine itself lay across the track. The tender and the baggage-car were also derailed, and lay beside this mutilated engine, which rattled, groaned, hissed, puffed, sputtered, and resembled those horses that fall in the street with their flanks heaving, their breast palpitating, their nostrils steaming and their whole body trembling, but incapable of any effort to rise.

There were no dead or wounded; only a few with bruises, for the train was not going at full speed. And we looked with sorrow at the great crippled iron creature that could not draw us along any more, and that blocked the track, perhaps for some time, for no doubt they would have to send to Paris for a special train to come to our aid.

It was ten o'clock in the morning, and I at once decided to return to Gisors for breakfast.

As I was walking along I said to myself:

"Gisors, Gisors—why, I know some one there. Who is it? Gisors? Let me see, I have a friend in this town." A name suddenly came to my mind, "Albert Marambot." He was an old school friend whom I had not seen for twelve years, and who was practising medicine in Gisors. He had often invited me to come and see him, I had always promised to do so, and at last I would take advantage of this opportunity. I asked the first passer-by:

"Do you know where Doctor Marambot lives?"

He replied, without hesitation, and with the drawling accent of the Normans:

"Rue Dauphine."

I presently saw, on the door of the house he pointed out, a large brass plate on which was engraved the name of my old chum. I rang the bell but the servant, a yellow-haired girl who moved slowly, said with a stupid air:

"He isn't here, he isn't here."

I heard a sound of forks and of glasses and I cried:

"Hello, Marambot!"

A door opened and a large man, with whiskers and a cross look on his face, appeared, with a dinner napkin in his hand.

I certainly should not have recognized him. One would have said he was forty-five at least, and in

a second all the provincial life that makes one grow heavy, dull, and old came before me. In a single flash of thought, quicker than the act of extending my hand to him, I could see his life, his manner of existence, his line of thought and his theories of things in general. I guessed at the prolonged meals that had rounded out his stomach, his after-dinner naps from the torpor of a slow indigestion aided by cognac, and his vague glances cast on the patient while he thought of the chicken that was roasting. His conversation about cooking, about cider, brandy and wine, the way of preparing certain dishes and of blending certain sauces were revealed to me at sight of his puffy red cheeks, his heavy lips and his lustreless eyes.

"You do not recognize me. I am Raoul Aubertin," I said.

He opened his arms and gave me such a hug that I thought he would choke me.

"You have not breakfasted, have you?"

"No."

"How fortunate! I was just sitting down to table, and I have an excellent trout."

Five minutes later I was sitting opposite him at breakfast. I said:

"Are you a bachelor?"

"Yes, indeed."

"And do you like it here?"

"Time does not hang heavy; I am busy. I have patients and friends. I eat well, have good health, enjoy laughing and shooting. I get along."

"Is not life monotonous in this little town?"

"No, my dear boy, not when one knows how to fill in the time. A little town is like a large one. The incidents and amusements are less varied, but one makes more of them; one has fewer acquaintances, but meets them more frequently. When you know all the windows in a street, each one of them interests you and puzzles you more than a whole street in Paris.

"A little town is very amusing, you know, very amusing, very amusing. Why, take Gisors. I know it at the tips of my fingers, from its beginning up to the present time. You have no idea what a queer history it has."

"Do you belong in Gisors?"

"I? No. I come from Gournay, its neighbor and rival. Gournay is to Gisors what Lucullus was to Cicero. Here, everything is for glory; they say 'the proud people of Gisors.' At Gournay, everything is for the stomach; they say 'the chewers of Gournay.' Gisors despises Gournay, but Gournay laughs at Gisors. It is a very comical country."

I perceived that I was eating something very delicious, hard-boiled eggs wrapped in meat jelly flavored with herbs and put on ice for a few moments. I said as I smacked my lips to compliment Marambot:

"That is good."

He smiled.

"Two things are necessary, good jelly, which is

hard to get, and good eggs. Oh, how rare good eggs are, with the yolks slightly reddish, and with a good flavor! I have two poultry yards, one for eggs and the other for chickens. I feed my laying hens in a special manner. I have my own ideas on the subject. In an egg, as in the meat of a chicken, in beef, or in mutton, in milk, in everything, one perceives, and ought to taste, the juice, the quintessence of all the food on which the animal has been fed. How much better food we could have if more attention were paid to this!"

I laughed as I said:

"You are a gourmand?"

"*Parbleu!* It is only imbeciles who are not. One is a gourmand as one is an artist, as one is learned, as one is a poet. The sense of taste is very delicate, capable of perfection, and as worthy of respect as the eye and the ear. Anyone who lacks this sense is deprived of an exquisite faculty, that of discerning the quality of food, just as one may lack the faculty of discerning the beauties of a book or a work of art; it means to be deprived of an essential organ, of something that belongs to higher humanity; it means to belong to one of those innumerable classes of the infirm, the unfortunate, and the fools of which our race is largely composed; it means to have the mouth of an animal, in a word, just like the mind of an animal. A man who cannot distinguish one kind of lobster from another; a herring—that admirable fish that

has all the flavors, all the odors of the sea—from a mackerel or a whiting; and a Cresane from a Duchess pear, may be compared to a man who should mistake Balzac for Eugène Sue; a symphony of Beethoven for a military march by a bandmaster; and the Apollo Belvedere for the statue of General de Blaumont.

"Who is General de Blaumont?"

"Oh, certainly you do not know. It is easy to see that you do not belong to Gisors. I told you just now, my dear boy, that they called the inhabitants of this town 'the proud people of Gisors,' and never was an epithet better deserved. But let us finish breakfast, and then I will tell you about our town and take you to see it."

He paused every now and then while he slowly drank a glass of wine, which he gazed at affectionately as he replaced the glass on the table. It was amusing to see him, with a napkin tied around his neck, his cheeks flushed, his eyes eager, and his whiskers spreading around his mouth as it kept working.

He made me eat until I was almost choking. Then, as I was about to return to the railway station, he seized me by the arm and took me through the streets. The town, of a pretty, provincial type, commanded by its citadel, the most curious monument of military architecture of the seventh century to be found in France, overlooks, in its turn, a long, green valley, where the large Norman cows graze and ruminate.

The doctor quoted:

" 'Gisors, a town of four thousand inhabitants in the department of Eure, mentioned in Cæsar's Commentaries: Cæsaris ostium, then Cæsartium, Cæsortium, Gisortium, Gisors.' I shall not take you to visit the old Roman encampment, the remains of which are still in existence."

I laughed and replied:

"My dear friend, it seems to me that you are affected with a special malady, which, as a doctor, you ought to study; it is called the spirit of provincialism."

He stopped abruptly.

"The spirit of provincialism, my friend, is nothing but natural patriotism," he said. "I love my house, my town and my province, because I discover in them the customs of my own village; but if I love my country, if I become angry when a neighbor sets foot in it, it is because I feel that my home is in danger, because the frontier that I do not know is the high road to my province. For instance, I am a true Norman. In spite of my hatred of the Germans and my desire for revenge, I do not detest them, I do not hate them by instinct as I hate the English, the real, hereditary natural enemy of the Normans; for the English traversed this soil inhabited by my ancestors, plundered and ravaged it twenty times, and my aversion to this perfidious people was transmitted to me by my father. See, here is the statue of the General."

"What general?"

"General Blaumont! We had to have a statue. We are not 'the proud people of Gisors' for nothing. So we discovered General de Blaumont. Look in this bookseller's window."

He drew me toward the bookstore, where about fifteen red, yellow, and blue volumes attracted the eye. As I read the titles, I began to laugh idiotically. They read:

Gisors, its origin, and its future, by M. X. . . member of several learned societies; *History of Gisors,* by the Abbé A. . . ; *Gisors, from the time of Cæsar to the present day, by* M. B. . . . , Landowner; *Gisors and its environs,* by Doctor C. D. . . ; *The Glories of Gisors,* by a Discoverer.

"My friend," resumed Marambot, "not a year, not a single year, you understand, passes without a fresh history of Gisors being published here; we now have twenty-three."

"And the glories of Gisors?" I asked.

"Oh, I will not mention them all, only the principal ones. We had first General de Blaumont, then Baron Davillier, the celebrated ceramist who explored Spain and the Balearic Isles, and brought to the notice of collectors the wonderful Hispano-Arabic china. In literature we have a very clever journalist, now dead, Charles Brainne, and among those who are living, the very eminent editor of the *Nouvelliste de Rouen,* Charles Lapierre and many others."

We were traversing a long street with a gentle incline. A June sun was beating down on it and driving the residents into their houses.

Suddenly at the farther end of the street appeared a drunken man who was staggering along, with his head forward, his arms and legs limp. He would walk forward rapidly a few steps, and then stop. When these energetic movements landed him in the middle of the road he stopped short and swayed on his feet, hesitating between falling and a fresh start. Then he would dart off in any direction, sometimes falling against a house, where he appeared to be fastened, as if he were trying to get in through the wall. Then he would suddenly turn round and look ahead of him, his mouth open and his eyes blinking in the sunlight, and getting away from the wall by a movement of the hips, he started off once more.

A little, half-starved cur followed him, barking; stopping when he stopped, and starting off when he started.

"Hello," said Marambot, "there is Madame Husson's Rosier."

"Madame Husson's Rosier," I exclaimed. "What do you mean?"

The doctor began to laugh.

"Oh, that is what we call drunkards round here. The name comes from an old story, which has now become a legend, although it is true in all respects."

"Is it amusing?"

"Very amusing."

"Well, then, tell it to me."

"I will."

Once, in this town, lived a very upright old lady who was a great guardian of morals and was called Madame Husson. You know, I am telling you the real names, not imaginary ones. Madame Husson took a special interest in good works, in helping the poor and encouraging the deserving. She was a little woman with a quick walk and wore a black wig. She was ceremonious, polite, on very good terms with the Almighty in the person of Abbé Malon, and had a profound horror of vice, and, in particular, of the vice the Church calls lasciviousness. Any irregularity before marriage made her furious, exasperated her till she was beside herself.

Now, this was at the time when they presented a prize as a reward of virtue to any girl in the environs of Paris who was found to be chaste. She was called a Rosière, and Madame Husson got the idea of instituting a similar ceremony at Gisors. She spoke about it to Abbé Malon, who at once made out a list of candidates.

Madame Husson had a servant, an old woman called Françoise, as upright as her mistress and as soon as the priest had left, Madame called the servant and said:

"Here, Françoise, are the girls whose names Monsieur le curé has submitted to me for the prize

of virtue; try to find out what reputation they bear in the district."

Then Françoise set out. She collected all the scandal, all the stories, all the tattle, all the suspicions. That she might omit nothing, she wrote it all down together with her memoranda in her housekeeping book, and handed it each morning to Madame Husson, who adjusted her spectacles on her thin nose, and read as follows:

Bread .....four sous
Milk .....two sous
Butter .....eight sous

Malvina Levesque got into trouble last year with Mathurin Poilu.

Leg of mutton.....twenty-five sous
Salt .....one sou

Rosalie Vatinel was seen in the Riboudet woods with Césaire Pienoir, by Mme. Onesime, the ironer, on July 20th about dusk.

Radishes .....one sou
Vinegar .....two sous
Oxalic acid .....two sous

Josephine Durdent is not believed to have committed a fault, although she corresponds with young Oportun, who is in service in Rouen, and who sent her a present of a cap by diligence.

Not one came out unscathed in this rigorous inquisition. Françoise inquired of everyone, neighbors, drapers, the principal, the teaching sisters at school, and gathered all possible details.

As there is not a girl in the world about whom gossips have not found something to say, there was not found in all the countryside one young girl whose name was free from scandal.

But Madame Husson desired that the Rosière of Gisors, like Cæsar's wife, should be above suspicion, and she was horrified, saddened and in despair at the record in her servant's housekeeping account-book.

They then extended their circle of inquiries to the neighboring villages; but with no satisfaction. They consulted the mayor. His candidates failed. Those of Dr. Barbesol were equally unlucky, in spite of the exactness of his scientific vouchers. But one morning Françoise, on returning from one of her expeditions, said to her mistress:

"You see, Madame, that if you wish to give a prize to anyone, there is only Isidore in all the country round."

Madame Husson remained thoughtful. She knew him well, this Isidore, the son of Virginie the greengrocer. His proverbial virtue had been the delight of Gisors for several years, and served as an entertaining theme of conversation in the town, and of amusement to the young girls who loved to tease him. He was past twenty-one, was tall, awkward, slow and timid; helped his mother in the business, and spent his days picking over fruit and vegetables, seated on a chair outside the door.

He had an abnormal dread of a petticoat, and he cast down his eyes whenever a female customer looked at him smilingly, and this well-known timidity made him a general butt of ridicule.

Bold words, coarse expressions, indecent allu-

sions, brought the color to his cheeks so quickly that Dr. Barbesol had nicknamed him "the thermometer of modesty." Was he as innocent as he looked? ill-natured people asked themselves. Was it the mere presentiment of unknown and shameful mysteries, or else indignation at the relations ordained as the concomitant of love, that so strongly affected the son of Virginie the greengrocer? The urchins of the neighborhood, running by the shop, would fling disgusting remarks at him, just to see him cast down his eyes. The girls amused themselves by walking up and down before him, cracking jokes that made him go into the store. The boldest among them teased him to his face merely to amuse themselves, made appointments with him, and proposed all sorts of things.

So Madame Husson had become thoughtful.

Certainly, Isidore was an exceptional case of notorious, unassailable virtue. No one, among the most skeptical, most incredulous, would have dared to suspect Isidore of the slightest infraction of any law of morality. He never had been seen in a café, never been seen at night on the street. He went to bed at eight o'clock, and rose at four. He was perfection, a pearl.

But Madame Husson still hesitated. The idea of substituting a boy for a girl, a "rosier" for a "rosière," troubled her, worried her a little, and she resolved to consult Abbé Malon.

The abbé responded:

"What do you desire to reward, Madame? It is virtue, is it not, and nothing but virtue? What does it matter to you, therefore, whether it is masculine or feminine? Virtue is eternal; it has neither sex nor country; it is 'Virtue.'"

Thus encouraged, Madame Husson went to see the mayor.

He approved heartily.

"We will have a fine ceremony," he said. "And another year if we can find a girl as worthy as Isidore we will give the reward to her. It will even be a good example that we shall set to Nanterre. Let us not be exclusive; let us welcome all merit."

Isidore, who had been told about this, blushed deeply and appeared happy.

The date was fixed for August 15, the festival of the Virgin Mary and of the Emperor Napoleon. The municipality had decided to make an imposing ceremony and had built the platform on the couronneaux, a delightful extension of the ramparts of the old citadel, where I shall take you presently.

With a natural revulsion of public feeling, the virtue of Isidore, ridiculed hitherto, had suddenly become respected and envied, as it would bring him five hundred francs besides a savings-bank book, a mountain of consideration, and glory enough and to spare. The girls now regretted their frivolity, their ridicule, their bold manners; and Isidore, though still modest and timid, had now a little

contented air that bespoke his internal satisfaction.

The evening before August 15 the entire Rue Dauphine was decorated with flags. Oh, I forgot to tell you why this street had been called Rue Dauphine.

It appears that the wife or mother of the Dauphin, I do not remember which, while visiting Gisors had been fêted so much by the authorities that during a triumphal procession through the town she stopped before a house in this street, halting the procession, and exclaimed:

"Oh, the pretty house! How I should like to go through it! To whom does it belong?"

They told her the name of the owner, who was sent for and brought, proud and embarrassed, before the Princess. She alighted, went into the house, wishing to go over it from top to bottom, and even shut herself in one of the rooms alone for a few seconds.

When she came out, the people, flattered at this honor paid to a citizen of Gisors, shouted "Long live the Dauphine!" But a rhymester wrote some words to a refrain, and the street retained the title of her royal highness, for

> "The Princess, in a hurry,
> Without bell, priest, or beadle,
> But with some water only,
> Had baptized it."

But to come back to Isidore.

They had scattered flowers all along the road, as

they do for processions at the Fête-Dieu, and the National Guard was present, acting on the orders of their chief, Commandant Desbarres, an old soldier of the Grand Army, who pointed with pride to the beard of a Cossack cut with a single sword-stroke from the chin of its owner by the commandant during the retreat in Russia, which hung beside the frame containing the cross of the Legion of Honor presented to him by the Emperor himself.

Moreover, his was a picked regiment celebrated throughout the province, and the company of grenadiers of Gisors was called on to attend all important ceremonies for a distance of fifteen to twenty leagues. The story goes that Louis Philippe, while reviewing the militia of Eure, stopped in astonishment before the company from Gisors, exclaiming:

"Oh, who are those splendid grenadiers?"

"The grenadiers of Gisors," replied the general.

"I might have known it," murmured the King.

So Commandant Desbarres came at the head of his men, preceded by the band, to get Isidore in his mother's store.

After a little air had been played by the band beneath the windows, the Rosier himself appeared on the threshold. He was dressed in white duck from head to foot, and wore a straw hat with a little bunch of orange blossoms as a cockade.

The question of his clothes had troubled Madame Husson a good deal, and she hesitated long between

the black coat of those who make their first communion and an entire white suit. Françoise, her counsellor, induced her to decide on the white suit, remarking that the Rosier would look like a swan.

Behind him came his guardian, his godmother, Madame Husson, in triumph. She took his arm to go out of the store, and the Mayor placed himself on the other side of the Rosier. The drums beat. Commandant Desbarres gave the order "Present arms!" The procession resumed its march toward the church, amid an immense crowd of people who had gathered from the neighboring districts.

After a short mass and an affecting discourse by Abbé Malon, they continued on their way to the couronneaux, where the banquet was served in a tent.

Before they took their seats at table, the Mayor made an address. This is it, word for word. I learned it by heart:

"Young man, a woman of means, beloved by the poor and respected by the rich, Madame Husson, whom the whole country is thanking here, through me, had the idea, the happy and benevolent idea, of founding in this town, a prize for virtue, which should serve as a valuable encouragement to the inhabitants of this beautiful country.

"You, young man, are the first to be rewarded in this dynasty of goodness and chastity. Your

name will remain at the head of this list of the most deserving, and your life, understand me, your whole life, must correspond to this happy beginning. To-day, in presence of this noble woman, of these soldier-citizens who have taken up their arms in your honor, in presence of this populace, affected, assembled to applaud you, or, rather, to applaud virtue in your person, you make a solemn contract with the town, with all of us, to continue until your death the excellent example of your youth. Do not forget, young man, that you are the first seed cast into this field of hope; give us the fruits that we expect of you."

The Mayor advanced three steps, opened his arms, and pressed Isidore to his heart.

The Rosier was sobbing without knowing why, from a confused emotion, from pride and a vague and happy feeling of tenderness.

Then the Mayor placed in one hand a silk purse in which gold tingled—five hundred francs in gold! —and in his other hand a savings-bank book. And he said in a solemn tone:

"Homage, glory and riches to virtue."

Commandant Desbarres shouted "Bravo!" the grenadiers vociferated, and the crowd applauded.

Madame Husson wiped her eyes, in her turn. Then they all sat down at the table, and the banquet was served.

The repast was magnificent and seemed interminable. One course followed another; yellow cider

and red wine in fraternal contact blended in the stomachs of the guests. The rattle of plates, the sound of voices, and of music softly played, made an incessant deep hum, and was dispersed abroad in the clear sky where the swallows were flying. Madame Husson occasionally readjusted her black wig, which would slip over on one side, and chatted with Abbé Malon. The Mayor, who was excited, talked politics with Commandant Desbarres, and Isidore ate, drank, as if he never had eaten or drunk before. He helped himself repeatedly to all the dishes, becoming aware for the first time of the pleasure of having one's belly full of good things which tickle the palate in the first place. He had let out a reef in his belt, and, without speaking, and although he was a little uneasy at a wine stain on his white waistcoat, he ceased eating in order to take up his glass and hold it to his mouth as long as possible, to enjoy the taste slowly.

It was time for the toasts. They were many and were loudly applauded. Evening was approaching and they had been at the table since noon. Fine, milky vapors were already floating in the air in the valley, the light nightrobe of streams and meadows; the sun neared the horizon; the cows were lowing in the distance amid the mists of the pasture. The feast was over. They returned to Gisors. The procession, now disbanded, walked in detachments. Madame Husson had taken Isidore's arm and was giving him a large quantity of excellent advice.

They stopped at the door of the fruit store, and the Rosier was left at his mother's house. She had not yet come home. Having been invited by her family to celebrate her son's triumph, she had taken luncheon with her sister after following the procession as far as the banqueting-tent.

So Isidore remained alone in the store, which was growing dark. He sat down on a chair, excited by the wine and by pride, and looked about him. Carrots, cabbages, and onions gave out their strong odor in the closed room, that coarse smell of the garden, blended with the sweet, penetrating odor of strawberries and the delicate, evanescent fragrance of a basket of peaches.

The Rosier took one of these and ate it, although he was as full as an egg. Then, all at once, wild with joy, he began to dance about the store, and something rattled in his waistcoat.

Surprised, he put his hand into his pocket and brought out the purse containing the five hundred francs which in his agitation he had forgotten. Five hundred francs! What a fortune! He poured the gold pieces out on the counter and spread them out with his big hand with a slow, caressing touch, so as to see them all at the same time. There were twenty-five, twenty-five round gold pieces, all gold! They glistened on the wood in the dim light, and he counted them over and over, one by one. Then he put them back into the purse, which he replaced in his pocket.

Who will ever know, or who can tell, what a terrible conflict took place in the soul of the Rosier between good and evil, the tumultuous attack of Satan, his artifices, the temptations that he offered to this timid virgin heart? What suggestions, what imaginations, what desires were not invented by the evil one to excite and destroy this chosen one? He seized his hat, Madame Husson's saint, his hat, which still bore the little bunch of orange blossoms, went out through the alley at the back of the house, and disappeared in the darkness.

Virginie, the fruiterer, on learning that her son had returned, went home at once, and found the house empty. She waited, without thinking anything about it at first; but after a quarter of an hour she made inquiries. The neighbors had seen Isidore come home and had not seen him go out again. They began to look for him, but could not find him. His mother, in alarm, went to the Mayor. The Mayor knew nothing, except that he had left him at the door of his home. Madame Husson had just retired when they informed her that her protégé had disappeared. She immediately put on her wig, dressed herself and went to Virginie's house. Virginie, whose plebeian soul was readily moved, was weeping copiously amid her cabbages, carrots and onions.

They feared some accident had befallen him. What could it be? Commandant Desbarres notified the police, who made a circuit of the town, and on

the high road to Pontoise they found the little bunch of orange blossoms. This was placed on a table round which the authorities were deliberating. The Rosier must have been the victim of some stratagem, some trick, some jealousy; but in what way? What means had been employed to kidnap this innocent creature, and with what object?

Weary of looking for him without any result, Virginie, alone, remained watching and weeping.

The following evening, when the coach passed by on its return from Paris, Gisors learned with astonishment that its Rosier had stopped the vehicle about two hundred metres from the town, had climbed up on it and paid his fare, handing over a gold piece and receiving the change, and that he had quietly alighted in the center of the great city.

There was great excitement all through the countryside. Letters between the Mayor and the chief of police in Paris brought no result.

A week passed.

Now, one morning, Dr. Barbesol, who had gone out early, perceived, sitting on a doorstep, a man dressed in a grimy linen suit, who was sleeping with his head leaning against the wall. He approached him and recognized Isidore. He tried to rouse him, but did not succeed. The ex-Rosier was in that profound, invincible sleep that is alarming, and the doctor, in surprise, went to seek assistance to carry the young man to Boncheval's drugstore. When they lifted him they found an empty bottle

under him, and when the doctor sniffed at it, he declared that it had contained brandy. That gave a suggestion as to what treatment he would require. They succeeded in rousing him.

Isidore was drunk—drunk and degraded by a week of guzzling; drunk, and so disgusting that a ragman would not have touched him. His beautiful white duck suit was a gray rag, greasy, muddy, torn, and destroyed, and he smelled of the gutter and vice.

He was washed, sermonized, shut up, and did not leave the house for four days. He seemed ashamed and repentant. They could not find on him either his purse, containing the five hundred francs, or the bankbook, or even his silver watch, a sacred heirloom left by his father, the fruiterer.

On the fifth day he ventured into the Rue Dauphine. Curious glances followed him, and he walked along with a furtive expression in his eyes and his head bent down. As he got outside the town toward the valley they lost sight of him; but two hours later he returned laughing and rolling against the walls. He was drunk, absolutely drunk.

Nothing could cure him.

Driven from home by his mother, he became a wagon-driver, and drove the charcoal wagons for the Pougrisel firm, which is still in existence.

His reputation as a drunkard became so well known and spread so far that even at Evreux they talked of Madame Husson's Rosier, and the sots of the countryside have received that general name.

A good deed is never lost.

Dr. Marambot rubbed his hands as he finished his story. I asked:

"Did you know the Rosier?"

"Yes. I had the honor of closing his eyes."

"What did he die of?"

"Delirium tremens, of course."

We had arrived at the old citadel, a pile of ruined walls dominated by the enormous tower of St. Thomas of Canterbury and the one called the Prisoner's Tower.

Marambot told me the story of this prisoner, who, with the aid of a nail, covered the walls of his dungeon with sculptures, tracing the reflections of the sun as it glanced through the narrow slit of a loophole.

I also learned that Clothaire II had given the patrimony of Gisors to his cousin, Saint Romain, bishop of Rouen; that Gisors ceased to be the capital of the whole of Vexin after the treaty of Saint-Clair-sur-Epte; that the town is the chief strategic center of all that portion of France, and that in consequence of this advantage she was taken and retaken over and over again. At the command of William the Red, the eminent engineer, Robert de Bellesme, constructed there a powerful fortress, which was attacked later by Louis le Gros, then by the Norman barons, was defended by Robert de Candos, was finally ceded to Louis le Gros by Geoffry Plantagenet, was retaken by the English in consequence of the treachery of the Knights Templars,

was contested by Philippe-Augustus and Richard the Lionhearted, was set on fire by Edward III of England, who could not take the castle, was again taken by the English in 1419, restored later to Charles VIII by Richard de Marbury, was taken by the Duke of Calabria, occupied by the League, inhabited by Henry IV, etc.

And Marambot, eager and almost eloquent, continued:

"What beggars, those English! And what sots, my boy; they are all Rosiers, those hypocrites!"

Then, after a silence, stretching out his arm toward the tiny river that glistened in the meadows, he said:

"Did you know that Henry Monnier was one of the most untiring fishermen on the banks of the Epte?"

"No, I did not know it."

"And Bouffé was a painter on glass."

"You are joking!"

"No, indeed. How is it you do not know these things?"

AN UNFORTUNATE RESEMBLANCE

IT was on the night of the first of January at Montonirail's—the refined painter of curved poses, of bright draperies, of Parisian prettiness. During one of those sudden changes of the electric light, which at one time throws rays of exquisite pale pink, at another of liquid gold, as if it had been filtered through the golden hair of a woman, and at another of a bluish hue with varied tints, such as the sky assumes at twilight, in which the women with their bare shoulders look like living flowers—that the tall Pescarelle, whom some persons called "Pussy," though I do not know why, suddenly said in a low voice:

"Well, people were not altogether mistaken—in fact, were only half wrong—when they coupled my name with that of pretty Lucy Plonelle. She had captivated my heart, just as a bird-catcher on a frosty morning catches an imprudent wren on a limed twig, and she might have done whatever she liked with me.

"I was under the charm of her enigmatical and

mocking smile, when her teeth had a cruel look between her red lips, and gleamed as if they were ready to bite and to heighten by pain the pleasure of the most delightful and voluptuous kiss.

"I loved everything about her, her feline suppleness, her slow glance, which seemed to glide from under her half-closed lids, full of promises and temptation, her somewhat extreme elegance, and her hands—her long, delicate, white hands, with blue veins, like the bloodless hands of a female saint in a stain-glass window, and her slender fingers, on which glittered only the large blood-drop of ruby.

"I would have given her all my remaining youth and vigor to have laid my burning hands on the nape of her cool, round neck, and to feel that bright, silky, golden hair enveloping me and caressing my skin. I never was tired of hearing her disdainful, petulant voice, those vibrations which sounded as if they were struck from clear glass, and that music, which at times became hoarse, harsh, and fierce, like the loud, sonorous calls of the Valkyries.

"Oh, heavens! to be her lover, to be her chattel, to belong to her, to devote one's whole existence to her, to spend one's last penny and to sink in misery, only to have the glory, the happiness of possessing the splendid beauty, the sweetness of her kisses, the pink and the white of her body with its demon-like soul all to myself, were it only for a few months!

"It makes you laugh, I know, to think that I

should have been caught like that, I who give such good, prudent advice to my friends, who fear love as I do those quicksands and shoals that appear at low tide, in which one is swallowed up and disappears!

"But who can answer for himself, who can defend himself against such a danger, against the magnetic attraction that comes from such a woman? Nevertheless, I was cured and perfectly cured, and that quite accidentally, and this is how the enchantment, apparently so complete, was broken.

"On the first night of a play I was standing near Lucy, whose mother had accompanied her, as usual, and they occupied the front seats of a box. From some irresistible attraction I never ceased looking at the woman whom I loved with all the strength of my being. I feasted my eyes on her beauty, I saw nobody except her in the theater, and did not listen to the piece being performed on the stage.

"Suddenly, however, I felt as if I had received a blow from a dagger in my heart, and I had an insane hallucination. Lucy had moved, and her pretty head was in profile in the same attitude and with the same lines as that of her mother. I do not know what shadow or what play of light had hardened and altered the color of her delicate features and destroyed their ideal prettiness, but the more I looked at them both, the one who was young and the one who was old, the greater that distressing resemblance became.

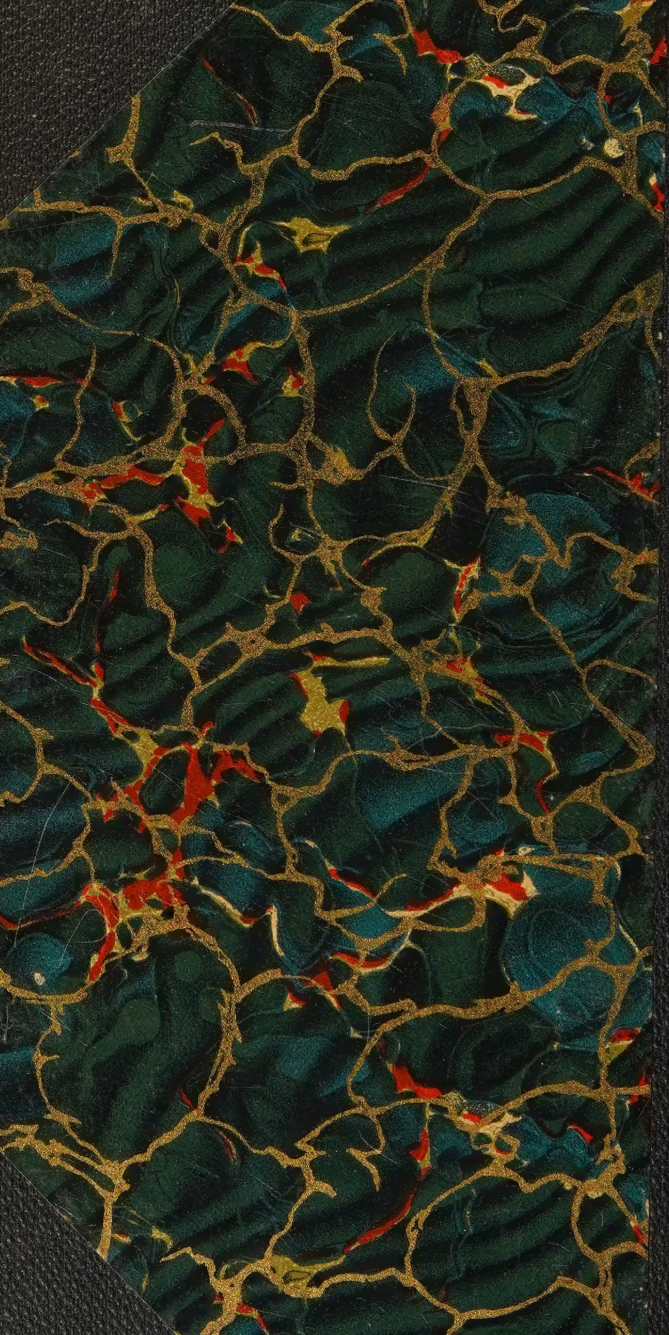
"I saw Lucy growing older and older, striving against those accumulating years that bring wrinkles in the face, produce a double chin and crow's-feet, and spoil the mouth. They looked almost like twins.

"I suffered so that I almost thought I should go mad, and, in spite of myself, instead of shaking off this feeling and making my escape out of the theater, into the noise and life on the boulevards, I persisted in looking at the mother, at the old lady, in scanning her face, in judging her, in dissecting her with my eyes; I got excited over her flabby cheeks, over those ridiculous dimples that were half filled up, over that treble chin, that hair which must have been dyed, those eyes which had no more brightness in them, and that nose which was a caricature of Lucy's beautiful, attractive little feature.

"I had prescience of the future. I loved Lucy, and I should love her more and more every day, that little sorceress who had so despotically and so quickly conquered me. I should not allow any participation or any intrigue from the day she gave herself to me, and when once we had been so intimately connected who could tell whether, just as I was defending myself against it most, the legitimate termination, marriage, might not come?

"Why not give one's name to a woman whom one loves, and of whom one is sure? The reason was that in time I should be tied to a disfigured

ugly creature with whom I should not venture to be seen in public, as my friends would leer at her with laughter in their eyes and with pity in their hearts for the man who was accompanying those remains.

"And so, as soon as the curtain had fallen, without saying good-by or good evening, I had myself driven to the Moulin Rouge, and there I picked up the first woman I came across, an alluring, impudent creature, and remained in her company until other memories departed."

"Well," Florise d'Anglet exclaimed, "I shall never take mamma to the theater with me again."